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THE ADVENTURE
INTO
THE UNKNOWN

AND OTHER SERMONS PREACHED IN
WESTMINSTER ABBEY

BY THE VEN.
R. H. CHARLES, D.Litt., D.D.
ARCHDEACON OF WESTMINSTER
FELLOW OF THE BRITISH ACADEMY

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PREFACE.

THE Sermons in this volume were preached in Westminster Abbey on various occasions during recent years. The dates are not given, since, though contemporary events in the social and political life of the Nation are frequently referred to in illustration of the principles enforced, the Sermons were not written with a view to such contemporary events, but to set forth the great truths of the Christian Faith in their bearing on the individual and corporate life. Such truths belong not to any special time but to all times.

R. H. C.

4 Little Cloisters,
Westminster Abbey,
March 1923.

OTHER SERMONS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

SERMONS PREACHED IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY
Macmillan & Co., London, 1917

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THE ADVENTURE INTO THE UNKNOWN.

I.

FAITH: AN ADVENTURE INTO THE UNKNOWN.

"Now the Lord said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, into the land that I will show thee."—GEN. xii. 1.

"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should afterwards receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went."—HEB. xi. 8.

THESE pregnant words describe the trial of Abram's faith. The trial was a severe one. Abram was required to go forth from his native land, from his father's house, from the home of kindred and friends, from everything that lengthened association had made dear, and human judgment regarded as assured and lasting; and in the next place he was bidden to go out to a country which he should afterwards receive, but which was afar off and unknown to him. How Abraham fulfilled the commands of God and through so doing became known to all after-times as "the father of the

faithful," it is not our intention to dwell further upon at present. Rather it is our purpose to show that these two commands—(1) "Go forth from thine own land and thy father's house," and (2) "Enter into the land that I will show thee"—are in reality no abnormal or extraordinary requisitions, but are simply the expression of the injunction that in some form or other God issues to every child of man, when first he wakes to the knowledge of divine truth and duty, and to the consciousness of His own grievous shortcomings in thought and character.

Seldom does the command come in childhood; for as yet the child has not outgrown the limits of his own small world: his aspirations do not as yet mar his satisfaction, nor do his desires, amply provided for as they are by the world around, lead him to think of other and higher worlds of being.

And thus as his longings and requirements are in harmony with his environment, the child enjoys peace; but this peace has little in common with the peace of God, for it is conditioned by, or based upon, ignorance or inexperience, and is therefore transitory, and vanishes when the consciousness of a higher life dawns on the opening mind, and makes for ever impossible the renewal of this primitive condition.

Now this and all like crises in the life of man are times when the soul consciously or unconsciously hears the command of God: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house."

This command is the summons to responsibility: the child who has heard it can no longer plead a spiritual

infancy, can no longer evade the responsibilities of life; he can no longer shelter himself under the protection of parent or loved one, but must stand by himself apart before God, and fulfil the command: "Get thee forth to the duties and tasks that thou art specially called upon to fulfil."

Now for every man this command has some special and individual meaning: whilst on all men it enjoins first and pre-eminently personal faithfulness to God in Christ, it summons one to raise the standard of purity and truth and self-denial in the home, another it requires to go forth and redress some social or economic wrong in the body politic, another to break with the benumbing traditions of the elders in Church or State, and taking his life in his hand to lead the way to that far-off country that awaits the coming of the faithful of all peoples and of all times.

But to this summons most men will not at first give ear: they prefer the life they know, with all its familiar good things and promised pleasures, to embarking on a strenuous life of possible trial and loss, which they know not. Hence they cling to the material life with its obvious attractions, and resolve to enjoy it to the full. Thus they refuse to go forward at God's command; they elect to live for the material world, not for the spiritual; for pleasure, not for duty; for self, not for God. Of these some are mere triflers, loiterers on the path of life, who regard almost with aversion the thought of duty and the strenuous existence, and whose chief task is not infrequently the invention of

decorous disguises, with which they, like the shirkers of all times, would fain hide their selfishness and good-for-nothingness, not only from others but from themselves. But the main body of this class are not such; the bulk of men must work whether they will or no, and so we have the vast competing crowd, which labours indeed, but labours only or mainly for the bread which perishes, and hopes to find its full satisfaction in a world where, if God has any place, it is the second and not the first. Now, however we describe the vast class who refuse the call of God to a new and higher life, it is clear that the reason of such refusal is all but universally the desire of a life of self-satisfaction or self-indulgence, in the belief that such a life is after all the true source of happiness. Now, such a life is really within the reach only of a few, and, even in the case of these few, it is obvious that their tenure of a certain kind of happiness is dependent on their tenure of health and the good things of this life, as well as on their ability to cultivate insensibility to the evil around them and to keep reflection at a distance. Nay more, the very happinesses of this class are generally of a negative character, and of the nature of reliefs, due to momentary evasions of present or threatened evils, and the possibility of such evasions naturally grows smaller year by year; for sooner or later their powers begin to fail, their energies decay, their hold on the outer world grows weaker, and they are brought face to face with the bankruptcy—not of things spiritual, for that had taken place long before—

but actually of material pleasures, and then the world becomes a weariness to them, and they a weariness to the world and to themselves, and they sink at last into cynicism, despair, and pessimism, or more usually into absolute indifference and helpless apathy, into a living death even to things material.

In short, if those who steadily refuse the call of God live sufficiently long, their life issues always in sheer tragedy.

But, happily, the number of those who hearken earlier or later to the call is large. These might be divided into two classes: 1. Those who embrace the life of duty, but rise no higher; 2. Those who embrace the life of duty, but rise further into the life of religion. Both classes in greater or less degree go forth in obedience to the call of God, and they go forth not knowing whither they go.

1. First let us consider briefly the life of duty. So far as a man's life is a life of duty, it is one of action and strenuous effort. The law of conscience claims his obedience, and so he must ever toil to bring every affection and thought and act into harmony with its requirements. Not a few of this class stand in no conscious relation to God, and yet fashion their lives according to the dictates of a high morality; they steadfastly ignore the drawbacks and trials of their lives, they cultivate patience and resignation, take no counsel but of their conscience, and maintain a lofty standard of rectitude and honour, living noble and high-hearted lives. To such characters we cannot but offer our profoundest admiration; at the call of duty they forsake the ease, and the comforts, and self-indul-

gences we rate so highly, and go forth not knowing whither they go, so long as the voice that summoned them still companies with them, and makes its utterances felt within them. In comparison with the approval of that inner voice they care nothing for the praise or blame of men, and steadily sacrifice the world and all it offers in order to become citizens of a higher and spiritual world, even of a good land that the God, whom they profess not to know, is revealing to them. And not infrequently on such men are bestowed the good things of this world also, and in their experience is realised the truth of those oracular words of Cromwell: "One never mounts so high as when one knows not whither one is going"; for even the commonplace world can read such lives, and is apt in its hour of need to fall back on their strength and claim their service.

"Not once or twice in our rough island-story
The path of duty was the way to glory:
He that walks it, only thirsting
For the right, and learns to deaden
Love of self, before his journey closes,
He shall find the stubborn thistle bursting
Into glossy purples, which outredden
All voluptuous garden roses.

Not once or twice in our fair island-story
The path of duty was the way to glory:
He that, following her commands,
On with toil of heart and knees and hands,
Through the long gorge to the far light has won
His path upward, and prevailed,
Shall find the toppling crags of Duty scaled
Are close upon the shining tablelands,
To which our God Himself is moon and sun."

Yes, truly it is so; the man of conscience cannot fail to be a strength to his day and generation. But, after all, when the note of conscience is pitched so high, and yet the peace and strength of religion are still unattained, the man so endowed can meet with little but disappointment from his fellows. Since for him there exists no interval between perception of the best, and the task of its immediate fulfilment, he expects that the same will hold in regard to others, and that he has only to set forth to them the reasonableness of right conduct to ensure its adoption, to show the equity of his reforms to procure their acceptance. And so he looks for devotion from the frivolous, sacrifice from the self-indulgent, and independence from the morally invertebrate, and is surprised that his exhortations fall on unheeding ears, and never suspects that he has laid too heavy a burden on weakened, pampered wills. In his disappointment he falls back on reproaches, and, while he scolds the unfaithfulness of his fellows, he tends to become censorious and proud and to lose his power of touching the hearts of men. It is well indeed in such case if his own fidelity, when thus isolated, does not finally suffer shipwreck.

Indeed, if from the life of conscience the man fails to rise to the life of religion, how terrible is the strain of such a life: the will must be for ever on the stretch, the muscles for ever tense, the perceptions for ever on the alert. So long indeed as the vital energies are in their prime, things go well with this moral athleticism, but, when the muscles grow flaccid, the nerves overstrained,

and morbid fancies engross the mind, only the noblest of this class can evade the onset of despair, and boldly confront the darkness to which according to their own stern creed they are hastening.

2. Next we turn our attention to those who rise from the life of duty into that of religion. We may take it as a rule that the life of duty rises into the life of religion unless in exceptional cases. And this tendency is very intelligible. For as the life of conscience on the one hand is life under law, the religious life is life under grace. In other words, we have here one phase of the great Pauline contrast of life under law and life under grace. That is, under the former we do what is right under compulsion—the compulsion, it is true, of conscience; under the latter we do what is right from willing choice, because what is right has itself become the object of love.

Now the doctrine of habit helps us to understand how this transformation of motive comes about. Let us suppose that we have a certain duty to do, but that not only have we no desire to do this duty, but actually regard it with strong aversion. If then, despite the absence of the right affection and the actual presence of the wrong, we go and do the duty, and that not once or twice, but persistently as often as the duty arises, then the very affection and enthusiasm that have for their object the fulfilment of the duty, are in due time born within us, and we come to discharge from love the obligation which hitherto we could only fulfil through the compulsion of conscience. Now in the course of

such a process we have consciously or unconsciously come into more immediate touch with God, the only Source and Inspirer of all excellence and all truth, and, in so far as a man gets into such actual touch with God, he has begun the religious life, he has so far passed from the kingdom of law into the kingdom of grace.

Now, my brethren, it is obvious that in the light of such a truth none of us is perfectly religious. More or less of our life, more rather than less, is still under the dominion of law. We have many duties laid upon us by God, which owing to our manifold failings we regard as heavy burdens and accordingly bear with reluctant and joyless spirit. Again and again we pray for their removal. And when at last we have learnt that it is God's will that we should bear them, still, how slow, even then, are we to give ourselves heart and soul to the task, and draw from God the strength and grace that will enable us to fulfil with willingness, if not with joy, the purposes and ends for which God sent us into the world. And yet, if despite inward reluctance and repeated failure, we steadfastly begin afresh and leave behind us ease and comfort and quiet, and press onward in the rugged path our God has chosen for us, resolved to pursue it, though we know not for the time whither we go or to what sacrifice it leads, then sooner or later on the way, our Lord, who had companied invisibly with us from the very outset, will manifest Himself and lift us into fellowship with His Spirit, and lead us even here into that goodly land He hath prepared for us,

where our chief and outstanding prayer will be—not for ease and self-indulgence, for quiet days and restful nights, not for exemption from mortal weariness and human sorrow; but for courage, for loyalty to truth, for a patience that endures to the end, for a readiness for His completed will, for true fellowship with Christ, and worthiness to suffer and endure for His sake.

In conclusion, so far as a man enters into real communion with our Lord he rises thereby into a spirit superior to the ills and troubles of life. The very agencies that destroy the well-being and life of the faithless, become the actual means by which the faithful make their steady ascent to God. Their communion with God endows them with enthusiasm, or at all events with trustfulness and calm, in circumstances where the faithless are overwhelmed with helplessness and despair, and where the mere moralist can at best only bow the head and submit. And just in proportion as he loses hold on the outer physical world, he is introduced into a new world of energy and joy.[1] As the physical powers fail and the purely mental faculties lose the keenness of their edge, the spiritual life matures within him, his patience and tenderness grow deeper, his faith fuller, while his hopes reach out to the consummation of that blessedness of which he has already had a foretaste. Thus, while the outward man is daily perishing, the inner man is renewed in greater fulness day by day. Each stage in the process of physical decay marks an-

[1] See further, on pp. 98–101.

other stage in spiritual growth, till at last the spirit annuls annihilation and under Christ's guidance enters into that good land that he had seen from afar—even into the gates of the city that hath foundations, the ever-blessed city of God.

II

GOD IS SPIRIT.

"God is Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."—JOHN iv. 24.

THESE words occur in one of the most familiar passages in the Fourth Gospel. Wearied by His journey through Samaria on the way to Galilee with His disciples, our Lord sat down by Jacob's well in the neighbourhood of Sychar, His disciples having gone before Him into Sychar to buy food. Now, as He sat there, a woman of Samaria came to draw water, and to her Jesus said, "Give me to drink." To appreciate the significance of this request to the Samaritan woman, we have only to recall the facts recounted in the two preceding chapters. Christ first preached in the Temple, but, when He was there rejected by the Jews, He abandoned it and spake, where opportunity offered, within Jerusalem. There, as the Evangelist tells us, He found many that believed on His name—that is, that recognised in Him the Messiah popularly expected by Judaism. But Jesus, knowing that their expectations of the Messiah were wholly incompatible with His own, left Jerusalem, as before He had left the Temple,

and began to teach and baptize throughout the province of Judea. Here again He was pursued by the hostility of the Pharisees, and so to avoid a premature collision with this party, He returned to Galilee, where His teaching would provoke less hostility and His opponents possess less power.

But to reach Galilee by the shortest route He must needs pass through Samaria, and so on His journey thither we find Him seated by Jacob's well close to Sychar and at the foot of Mount Gerizim. This Gerizim is the mountain mentioned in Deut. xxvii. 21, from the summit of which Moses directed six of the Tribes to pronounce the blessings that should attend on those that kept the law. Three short periods in our Lord's ministry are thus represented as connected successively with the Temple, with Jerusalem, and with the province of Judea, and then, when He was rejected by each of these in turn, He proceeded to Galilee. But on the way through Samaria a notable incident occurred, and this was all the more notable, since it represents the ministry, which had been rejected by the Jews of the southern province, as being accepted by the Samaritans, whom the Jews anathematised as heretics. But this is not all. In Judea, John the Baptist, than whom there was none greater among the O.T. prophets, had acted as Christ's herald, and with very partial success, whereas in Samaria it is a woman, and as such lightly regarded by the doctors of the law, a member moreover of a despised nation, that acts as Christ's herald and that with abounding success. Thus the moment our

Lord passes beyond the limits of the chosen nation, He ignores alike the prejudices of sex and of nationality. Furthermore, this woman was one who had a past as well as a present, and the one hardly more reputable than the other. Of course it is quite possible that she may have divorced her five husbands on adequate grounds from the standpoint of Samaritan law, but her present position was indefensible. The man with whom she now lived was not her husband. That she possessed, however, some elements of the honest and good heart, despite her degradation, is to be inferred from the fact that, when Christ bade her call her husband, she made no attempt to cover her shameful condition, but with ingenuous candour declared, "I have no husband."

This confession prepares us for further developments in this interview. But we must not expect too much. The woman recognises Christ to be a prophet, but though her conscience is partially awakened, she does not wish Him to go more deeply into the painful subject of her life. Besides, as her subsequent words show, she was genuinely interested in the great theological question that divided the Samaritans from the Jews, and so she put to Him the burning question of the day: Is Mount Gerizim, where our fathers worshipped, or Jerusalem, the place where men ought to worship?

The fact that our Lord treats her question seriously proves that some element of sincerity underlay the question, though it served for the moment to divert the conversation from a question of practical religion

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to one of theology. This question brings out the gulf that lies between an interest in religion and an interest in theology. The woman's religious position was incapable of defence: she was living in sin; but her theology from the standpoint of her own Church was most orthodox. But even the most orthodox theology stands on an incomparably lower level than true religion. For theology at its best is but man's thought about God, the expression in formal terms of his religious experience, which, therefore, may vary from generation to generation and indeed must vary from age to age. Religion, on the other hand, is a consciousness of direct communion with God's Spirit and the moulding of our life in accordance with His will. In its earliest form—as in children and in grown-up people who have not outgrown the childish mind and who through incapacities, inherited or self-wrought, have never attained their moral and spiritual majority—religion may simply consist of a dutiful obedience to God's will, or what claims to be God's will, conveyed to them, not immediately by God's Spirit, but mediately through parent or teacher, priest or prophet; or, outgrowing these childish traditions, religion may rise through various stages and come at last to be an all-but-unbroken communion of man's spirit with the Spirit of God.

Now to identify theology with religion, even when the latter is conceived in its lowest terms, and to make the intellectual acceptance of certain dogmatic formulas the indispensable condition of eternal life, is to destroy

the very essence of religion, by substituting the acceptance of certain imperfect formulas of belief for the living intercourse of man's spirit with the Spirit of God.

But, though the woman of Samaria apparently diverted the conversation from a practical question of the religious life to a theological one, her success was but momentary. For in answering her question the Great Teacher answered it in such terms as to satisfy her theological difficulties and at the same time to set forth the essence of all true religion. "Woman," He replies, "believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain"—and at these words we can conceive our Lord pointing to Mount Gerizim at the very foot of which they were then standing by the well—"the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father. . . . The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth. God is Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Religion, then, true religion, is not a matter of the intellect, though it must from age to age express itself in intellectual terms: religion is a living and true communion with the God of truth and righteousness and love.

This statement, "God is Spirit," is unique alike in its simplicity and its profoundness, and likewise the corollary that follows from it, "they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

Nothing, however full may be the creed we profess or the ritual we observe, can take the place of such worship. Such worship requires the true and living intercourse of spirit with Spirit. From such worship are naturally excluded the worldly mind, with its self-entailed shiftiness and uncertainties; the indolent temper, with its unwillingness to face the tasks, the duties, and sacrifices whose fulfilment mean for it light and life; the alienated heart, self-centred or distraught with corroding cares; and the uncertain will, rebellious or outworn through its own disloyalties.

Now all these are self-wrought incapacities for the worship of God. But, since they are self-wrought, since they are not of God's ordination but of man's own making, no soul that truly seeketh God is excluded from fellowship with God. Such souls will find help in the spiritual experience of other souls, and at times in creeds and in rituals; but, when creeds lay down dogmatically the acceptance of certain terms as necessary to salvation, and sacerdotalism and ritualism prescribe certain ways as the only avenues of approach to the Father of Spirits, such things are felt to be at once a hindrance and an affront to most souls that are seeking to find God, and commune with Him face to face.

If the soul is in earnest in its quest of God, the result of such quest is assured. If with all our hearts we truly seek Him, we shall inevitably find Him. And in such spiritual experience we shall come to know two things: to know ourselves and to know God. To know

ourselves will be to recognise beyond possibility of doubt that every evil thing within us is against the law of our being, that the selfish or vain thought, the proud or uncharitable or malicious temper, the impure or unmerciful desire, the mean or false principle of action, are contrary to any true life or peace of the soul. And as under the urgency of God's Spirit we learn thus to know ourselves, we learn at the same time to know God—to know the impossibility of connecting any unworthy, distrustful, or unrighteous thought with God, and accordingly we brush aside as undeserving of a moment's consideration the immoral elements in the theologies of the past, which represented God as one whom it would be wrong for a good man to imitate and impossible for any man to love. If men had but hearkened to the voice of God's Spirit in their hearts, there would not have been so many arrests in spiritual development down the ages; nor would religion itself have so often degenerated into an ecclesiastical tradition of dogmas and rituals, and self-constituted infallibilities, whether Protestant, Anglo-Catholic, or Papal, and made the souls of men the vassals of its most narrow-minded and bigoted expounders.

But let us deal more directly with this question in relation to God's Forgiveness,[1] God's Providence, and God's Omnipotence. Now as regards the first — God's forgiveness — we learn in communion with God to know His holiness and His hatred of

[1] See the four sermons on this subject, pp. 201–256.

sin, and at the same time His readiness to forgive us unto the uttermost, if we but truly repent and turn to Him.

It is only in such communion that we can rightly apprehend the true nature of God's holiness. Men have constantly misconceived the nature of God's holiness, and held it impossible for Him to forgive man's sins, unless full satisfaction is made either by him or some other. Accordingly, theories of satisfaction have been advanced from age to age, the object of which has been to reconcile God's forgiveness of sin with His justice.

More or less these theories represent God as never forgiving a debt until it has been paid in full. But, if Christ bids His followers to forgive as freely as God forgives, then this conception of God is absolutely unspiritual and false. The object of Christ's life and death is not to placate, to pacify, to reconcile God to man, but to reveal God's infinite love to man and so to redeem and reconcile man to God.

Now, if we rightly apprehend God as Spirit, our own experience will confirm the teaching of Christ. Since God is Spirit, then the sin which banishes man from His presence resides essentially, not in the sinner's act, but in the spirit which perpetrated the act—that is, in the man himself. If, then, the man repent, he is of necessity forgiven and restored to communion with God. This is essentially what forgiveness is, namely, restoration to communion with God. As for the physical

and other penalties that attend on the commission of sin, these do not enter into the question of true forgiveness. These penalties naturally take their course. The suffering entailed by them takes effect, whether a man is forgiven or not, and hence has nothing to do with the actual fact of forgiveness; for forgiveness is a wholly spiritual thing and lies infinitely beyond and above all such penalties. It is the reconciliation of the human spirit with the Divine, the restoration of the repentant soul to communion with and to its home in God.

Even when these penalties weigh most heavily on the man that has been forgiven, the relation of his spirit to the Spirit of God is often one full of peace and thankfulness and even of joy.

In regard to the penalties that follow sin, we are dealt with according to what we have been—that is, according to our deserts.

It is true that in the forgiven soul these penalties speedily achieve their purpose and work themselves out, whereas, in the unrepentant soul, they grow severer in the measure of their duration, and, unless forgiveness intervenes, menace the very existence of the soul, which suffers under their visitation. But though in the lower sphere of our being we are dealt with in accordance with what we have been, in the spiritual we are dealt with in accordance with what we are. Hence, as St. John says in his First Epistle, if we confess our sins, if we turn to God with truly humble and repentant hearts, God is faithful and just to forgive

us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. The supreme end of all revelation is to bring us into personal and unbroken communion with God and with each other, even as Christ has taught us : " That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may be one in us."

And, as we have already observed, this is the constant teaching of Christ, who came to reveal God as the loving and forgiving Father of His children, not as a Being who had to be appeased and placated by sacrifices, and offerings, and masses, or other fond things, vainly invented and grounded on no warranty of true Christian experience or the teaching of Christ.

Next let us deal shortly with God's Providence and God's Omnipotence—truths which cannot retain their vital force, unless held in conjunction with the great truth that God is Spirit. Apart from that truth, they will fail us or be misconceived by us. The Providence and the Omnipotence of God are primary truths, and there are no truths so misused as primary truths. For they are accepted when they are not needed, and abandoned when they are. Almost everybody is ready to accept these truths, and almost everybody is unconscious of the consequences that flow from them ; and either fails or is incompetent to apply them to special cases, when the need for such application is most urgent.

Now in regard to these truths they differ in certain respects fundamentally from those of science. In the

region of science, when once certain laws or uniformities are established, the mind can rest securely upon them and draw its conclusions, whether or not it holds in remembrance the proofs on which they were founded. But in the case of spiritual truths it is otherwise. The evidence for our belief in these must be ever fresh and living, and won through the presence of God's Spirit with our spirit, else they will fail us in our hour of need. There are of course times of barrenness, when a cloud as it were hides God from our spiritual vision. In such exceptional seasons we must fall back on the spiritual convictions we have won in happier hours. Moreover, these seasons of darkness are often the necessary discipline of our faith ; at the worst they are but temporary. Hence, amid all the strife and turmoil, the passing of old-established systems yielding place to the new, the fall of empires, and the wreck of ancient civilisations, we can go on our way strong in faith, assured on the one hand that not a sparrow falleth to the ground save with our heavenly Father's knowledge, and on the other ashamed of the hours of our unbelief, when we feared that each fresh step of God's Providence, attended by the breaking up of old traditions and honoured customs, would bring ruin on God's world, while in the reality of things they were but travail pains leading to further growths in Christian truth and liberty and brotherhood. The assurance that God's Spirit is with our spirit, despite all our doubts and failings, begets the irresistible conviction that, if He cares for a sparrow,

then He cares infinitely more for every soul of man that He has made.

Again, when we feel God's presence in our own hearts, we shall have little difficulty in believing in God's Omnipotence, that with Him all things are possible. But this omnipotence is to be conceived ethically rather than physically or metaphysically. It is not sheer and unconditioned force. That God possesses such power we are convinced, but we are just as fully convinced that He cannot use it simply as power, since such use of it would be unethical and only serve to compel men's recognition of His sovereignty, not win their glad acceptance of it—would enslave their spirits, not make them free.

It is in the light of this conception of God's omnipotence that we must regard the difficulties that beset our faith through the world's disorders—difficulties that stagger the faith of some men and destroy that of others. Let us contrast the claims of faith and the actual state of things. On the one hand we are called to believe in God as the Creator of the world, and all that therein is, as its never-failing Providence and final goal; and whilst we acknowledge these august claims we have on the other hand to face Earth's myriad evils, raising their loud disclaimers of such spiritual issues, its endless wars with their attendant horrors, its fiendish cruelties and obscenities, and, worst of all, the appalling indifference and callousness that seem to pervade and embrace the whole.

Now to man, bewildered between the ideals he cher-

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ishes in his heart and the discordant facts that confront him from without, comes the declaration: "God is Spirit." At the centre of and behind all this apparent chaos of conflicting powers, ideals and forces, is the God we worship. His Spirit is guiding and quickening every form of life, from the amœba to the highest intelligence of the universe : in the purely inorganic world prescribing the exact law of form and movement ; in the organic and lower animal world pressing into this reluctant medium measures of life, instinct, intelligence, and altruism, equal to or above its utmost capacity ; in the world of humanity quickening and inspiring our race in its inevitable struggle with the instincts, passions and habits of the lower life from which it has sprung, and ever leading it onward to the spiritual and divine ideals, which it is at once man's task and glory to achieve.

In such a divine epic there must be tragedies, but, where the Spirit of God is, these can only be provisional and partial. God's Spirit, it is true, is hampered by the limitations of the medium in which He works, and above all by the rebellious wills of men. Notwithstanding, He will not treat men as the mere agents of His Will, but as beings fit to become their own ends and endowed by His help with power to achieve them. Hence He will not constrain men by His power, but win them by His unwearying patience, His unfathomable goodness, and His unquenchable love, and, where these are present and ever present, as they are in the world of our humanity, in its march onwards and upwards,

failures may occur and disasters many and frequent, but final shipwreck and annihilation are things impossible.

"God is Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

III.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF HUMILITY AND MEEKNESS.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."—MATT. v. 3, 5.

THE Sermon on the Mount opens with a number of beatitudes. How many these are is a subject of controversy. If we reckon them simply as they stand in v. 3–11, there are nine. But it is obvious that the last two are duplicates. Thus in verse 10 we have: "Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake"; and in verse 11: "Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you and persecute you." But not only does verse 11 appear to be a duplicate of verse 10, but there are reasonable grounds for regarding verse 10 as the last of the beatitudes proper, and verse 11 as the beginning of a new section. For in verse 10 the blessed are spoken of in the third person—"Blessed are they," as in all the preceding beatitudes, whereas in verse 11 there is a sudden and unexpected change into the second person—"Blessed are ye," a change which persists throughout the rest of the Sermon. Also it is to be observed that

the promise in verse 10 is the same as in verse 3: "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." These two facts taken together make it probable that the Evangelist intended verses 3–10 to be taken together as a whole, complete in itself, and verses 11, 12 to be connected with the section that follows in the second person.

This is the first inference we draw, but, before we pursue this subject further, it will be helpful if we briefly contrast the methods of the first and third Evangelists. St. Luke definitely states at the outset his intention to write a life of the events and sayings of our Lord in their chronological order, and to recount them in their original historical setting. But the method of St. Matthew was wholly different. Only in a limited degree does his Gospel observe a chronological order, and in the great collections of the sayings, parables, and other discourses of our Lord he definitely abandons the order of time, and groups together sayings and parables that were uttered on different occasions and addressed to different hearers. If we study St. Luke we see that the Sermon on the Mount in St. Matthew consists of several sermons carefully put together by St. Matthew. In the case of both Gospels we have simply a selection of our Lord's words and discourses, and that an incomplete one. The account in one Evangelist needs often to be supplemented by materials from the other.

Let us return now to the beatitudes. We have seen good grounds for regarding verses 3–10 as a whole, but having done so we are brought face to face with a fresh

difficulty. These verses include eight beatitudes. But the number eight is not a sacred number in any sense and is without a parallel in St. Matthew, and in St. Matthew certain sacred numbers play a great rôle, as we shall see. In Revelation there are exactly seven beatitudes pronounced in great crises in the world-drama represented in that book, and this number is no accident there, for it frequently recurs. The same number of beatitudes is also found in 2 Enoch. Similarly in St. Matthew the number seven has a significant rôle. Thus in chap. xxiii. there are seven[1] woes pronounced against the religious leaders of Judaism—a fact that might suggest that there were seven beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount. St. Matthew also[2] groups together seven parables in chap. xiii., and seven petitions in the Lord's Prayer, whereas in St. Luke ix. 2–4 there are only five petitions.[3] Again, in chap. i. St. Matthew deliberately omits several names in the genealogy of Christ in order to compress it into three groups each of fourteen names, *i.e.* six groups of seven.

[1] It is noteworthy that in later MSS. these seven woes were later expanded into eight, just as we hope to prove that the seven beatitudes were expanded into eight by the very early interpolation of v. 4.

[2] Another instance of our evangelist's devotion to certain numbers is to be seen in his division of his book into five sections—vii. 28, xi. 1, xiii. 53, xix. 11, xxvi. 1—after the example of the five books of the Pentateuch, the five books of the Psalms, the five Megilloth, the five divisions of Sirach, of 1 Enoch, and of the ethical work *The Sayings of the Fathers*. Three also is a favourite number: cf. v. 22 (three degrees of sin); vi. 1–18 (three external duties of alms, prayer, and fasting). See Hawkins' *Horæ Synopticæ*, 165 sqq.

[3] Hawkins (*Horæ Synopticæ*, 166 n.) draws attention to the fact that each of the two additional petitions contains a characteristic Matthæan word γενηθήτω and ὁ πονηρός or τὸ πονηρόν.

Bearing these facts in mind, let us now return to the eight beatitudes, in reference to which the analogies just cited would lead us to expect seven, and let us question the MSS. as to whether they contain any evidence for or against the text as it stands in our English Bibles and in most of the Greek MSS. Now, though there are several unquestionably corrupt passages in the N.T., where the MSS. wholly fail us owing to the fact that these corruptions arose before the existing MSS. and Versions came into being, it happens that we are more fortunate in respect to the passage before us. For ancient evidence attests a diversity in the order of the second and third beatitudes.[1] Thus, whereas most MSS. and Versions uphold the present order of verses 4 and 5, one great uncial and the two oldest Versions reverse the order and put verse 5 before verse 4.[2] On the ground of this fact two distinguished scholars—Wellhausen and Professor Bacon of Yale—say that verse 5, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth," which is really Ps. xxxvi. 11, was first written

[1] Attention has already been drawn to the fact that in the true text of Matt. xxiii. there are seven woes and no more. But it is instructive to observe that in xxiii. 14 (found in the A.V. but rightly omitted in the R.V.) we have an interesting analogy to verse 4. First of all, the textual evidence makes it clear that the woe in xxiii. 14 is an interpolation. In the next place, the textual authorities that support xxiii. 14 are divided as to *the place where they add it*, as they are in v. 4. Thus E F G H al. with some Versions add this verse before 13, whereas some cursives, the Itala and Syr. Cur., add it after 13. ℵ B D L Z al. omit this verse. From these facts it follows that xxiii. 14 (adapted from Mark xii. 40; Luke xx. 47) was interpolated at a much later date than verse 4.

[2] *i. e.* D, some ancient Latin authorities and the ancient Syriac Versions.

as a gloss in the margin, and then subsequently incorporated in the text by most authorities after verse 4, and by a powerful minority after verse 3. If this is the correct solution of the difficulty, and at first sight it is rather attractive, we have then exactly seven beatitudes. But the more closely we study this solution of the difficulty, the more unsatisfactory it becomes. I will now put before you briefly certain grounds for rejecting Wellhausen's hypothesis, and the solution which I have arrived at from a fresh study of the passage. First of all, the conflicting order of the verses attested in the two classes of textual authorities does naturally, though not necessarily, point to some interpolation, but, that it is not verse 5 that is interpolated but verse 4, I will now produce evidence. First of all, verse 4 comes in most awkwardly between 3 and 5, which are essentially related to each other, seeing that verse 5 presupposes verse 3. That is, the meekness that is commended in verse 5 presupposes the humility that is commended in verse 3. Hence we should expect verse 5 to follow immediately on verse 3. In confirmation of this close connection between verses 5 and 3, we might quote St. Matt. xi. 29, where the two ideas are brought together in the same sentence: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and humble in heart." Nowhere else in the other three Gospels does this combination of these two graces occur. Now some one of my hearers may reflect—What of the *Magnificat* in St. Luke, which we have sung this afternoon, in which it is stated that "He hath exalted the

humble and meek"?[1] Here we have an interesting instance in which a corrupt reading established itself in our Prayer Book. The reading "humble and meek" is not older than the sixteenth century. It is not found in a single Greek MS. nor in any ancient version. Thus the combination "humble and meek" belongs only to the first Gospel. Hence to read verse 5 immediately after verse 3 would be thoroughly characteristic of St. Matthew, and if any verse is to be rejected it is not verse 5 but verse 4, since it severs two ideas which are essentially allied.

But this is not all. Even if we follow the less strongly attested text and read verse 4 after verse 5, this will not be sufficient. For verse 4, "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted," is different in form from the rest of the beatitudes in Matthew. In Matthew each class that is blessed *is carefully defined*, so that it is at once recognised as worthy to be blessed—the poor in spirit, the meek, those that hunger and thirst after righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, those that are persecuted for righteousness' sake. But there is no such clearness in the words, "Blessed are they that mourn." The class of mourners here would, if this beatitude came from St. Matthew's hand, have been as carefully defined as are the other classes in the rest of the beatitudes.

[1] "Humble and meek" is not found in any of the great English Versions; it is not found in Henry VII.'s *Goodly Primer* of 1535, but it appears in Edward VI.'s *First Prayer Book* in 1549, and in every successive edition of this work. The true reading is, of course, "the humble."

For these mourners do not include individuals or nations mourning over the wreck of their baffled knaveries, or the miscarriage of their treacherous deceits. Hence, since the MSS. show that the text is here somewhat doubtful, since further the very diction and form are against the genuineness of the beatitude relating to the mourners and in favour of that relating to the meek, we may with good reason conclude that the second beatitude here originated in a gloss written by a scribe in the margin, and afterwards incorporated in the text. It may have been suggested by one of the beatitudes of St. Luke; for the class of mourners is mentioned without any definition, just as it is in three cases out of the four in St. Luke, and it is left to the reader to interpret them in a spiritual sense: "Blessed are ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of heaven"; "Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled"; "Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh."

If, then, we may conclude that there were originally seven beatitudes and that verse 4 is an intrusion, the thought is very illuminating. Let us read these two beatitudes together as, we infer, they stood originally: "Blessed are the poor in spirit (that is, "the humble"): for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." Here the two classes that are blessed are "the humble" and "the meek." Of the former, it is said that theirs is the kingdom of heaven, that they are already citizens of that kingdom, that they already possess it; of the second—not that they do possess the earth, but that

at some future time they shall possess it. In certain respects, therefore, the two classes are distinct. Who, then, are these two classes? This is an important question, as some recent scholars have treated the two phrases, "the poor in spirit" and "the meek," as practically identical. But the meaning of the Greek words makes this identification impossible. Who, then, are "the poor in spirit," and who are "the meek"?

First, as regards the former—"the poor in spirit." The word "poor," [1] in Hebrew, had two distinct meanings—a literal and a metaphorical one. Literally, it meant those who were afflicted or impoverished or without adequate means of subsistence; metaphorically, it meant those who were humble in heart, disposition, or character. Now it is obvious that the word "poor" has here its metaphorical meaning, and St. Matthew, by adding the phrase "in spirit," puts this beyond doubt. And yet even if this phrase were omitted we should have to interpret the word "poor" according to its secondary Hebrew meaning, just as we do in Luke vi. 20, "Blessed are ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God." This beatitude, therefore, deals with humility, which is the initial grace of the Christian life. And further, since, though the texts of the beatitudes differ both as regards number and form, they agree in placing this beatitude first, we may conclude that it was the first to fall from our Lord's lips.

There is, moreover, a notable fitness in the first

[1] = *'âni*, translated in the LXX forty-one times by πτωχός or πένης, nine or ten times by ταπεινός, and three times by πραύς.

beatitude being pronounced on humility, for humility is the indispensable condition of progress, not only in religion and morals but also in science, in matters of peace, in the affairs of war. For its essential characteristic is—a willingness to learn whether from friend or foe. On the place of humility in science I will content myself by quoting the pronouncements of Bacon and Huxley in this respect. "Into the kingdom of science," writes Bacon, in his *Novum Organum*, "as into the kingdom of heaven, one cannot enter save as a little child"; and Huxley in a letter to Kingsley expresses himself as follows: "Science seems to me to teach in the highest and strongest manner the great truth, which is embodied in the Christian conception of entire surrender to the will of God. Sit down before the facts as a little child, follow humbly wherever nature leads, or you shall learn nothing." [1]

That humility is the indispensable condition of progress is universally conceded. Since, then, in all departments of life and character it is a prerequisite of progress therein, we naturally desire a clearer knowledge of what humility is. Now the first step to such knowledge is to disabuse our minds of a popular false conception of it, which unfortunately has the sanction of St. Chrysostom. This great Father fell into the amazing error of defining humility as a making ourselves small when we are great. Exhibitions of this phase of humility are familiar to us all. Which of us has not heard certain individuals among our friends or acquaintances

[1] *Life and Letters of T. H. Huxley*, 1900, i. 219.

morbidly deploring their shortcomings and depreciating their gifts and achievements? And, whilst we listened in uncomfortable silence to such outpourings, did we not reflect that, if we were but to express our concurrence with such confessions, we should run the risk of losing their friendship for ever? Such a misconception of humility is not infrequent even amongst excellent people. For a picture of this caricature of humility in its worst form we have only to turn to Dickens's portrait of Uriah Heep.

Humility does not consist in the mere absence of pretension, certainly not in a morbid self-depreciating spirit: it is no transient state of feeling into which a man may artificially work himself; rather it is a true and right estimate of ourselves, made in all soundness of mind, an estimate which Christian ethics does not require us to falsify or unjustly lower. St. Paul bids us not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, but to have a right and sound judgment of ourselves. But, this being so, how comes it that the Greek moralists of our Lord's day, and back to the time of Aristotle, depreciated humility and regarded it as the mark of an abject or mean-spirited man, whereas the N.T. recognises it as the first and indispensable grace of Christianity? These diverse estimates as to the worth of humility arose from the different standards acknowledged by ancient Greek and Christian teachers. The Greek had confessedly a low standard, and the goodness that achieved this standard grew proud from comparison of itself with lesser goodness, and accord-

ingly could only see in humility a veritable meanness and slavishness of spirit. Thus lowness of ideal and pride of attainment go hand in hand, even as conceit of intellect and dogmatic assurance are generally strongest where intellectual aspiration and intellectual attainments are weakest. But, whereas the standard in Greek ethics and throughout the heathen world is low, the standard in Christianity is immeasurably high, being divine; for therein man is set face to face with God, and so Christian goodness is an aspiration ever straining towards a divine ideal and ever receiving fulfilment in some measure, yet hardly fulfilled ere a higher has dawned upon it. But at every stage fulfilment is at the best imperfect. And from this contrast of that which he has done with that which he ought to have done, arises the Christian grace of humility. Divine ideals and true humility are never sundered, and so self-complacency and simple self-content are impossible elements in the Christian life. With each fresh grace won, a diviner ideal ever dawns upon the faithful heart and deepens humility as it enlarges aspiration. The Christian man cannot but think lowly of himself, if he would think truly; for he knows that his real worth in the world is that which he stands for—not in man's sight but—in God's.

Such being the nature of humility the promise given by Christ to the humble in spirit is that, even now, theirs is the kingdom of heaven—that is, that they are already citizens of God's kingdom; just as St. Paul declares in Phil. iii. 20, "Our citizenship is even now in heaven." We are already members of the divine commonwealth.

Or again in Eph. ii. 19, "Ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and members of God's own household."

Having now studied the first beatitude, we proceed to its natural sequel: "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." If we ask in what respect is meekness related to humility in the N.T., the answer is not far to seek. Meekness is in the main the outward expression of humility, humility being essentially a grace of the spirit or inner man. Meekness, so far as it is a Christian grace, must spring from true humility of heart. It presupposes humility, and presupposing it cannot exist without it. They are in a certain sense the complements of each other. Christian meekness is the outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual grace of humility. But meekness is more than this: it is humility itself coming into manifestation in the sphere of human life.

Having now grasped the source and inner spring of meekness, we shall best apprehend its character and manifestation by contrasting it with some of its counterfeits. Christian meekness has nothing in common with that constitutional meekness which is sometimes synonymous with timidity, and sometimes with insensibility to insult or affront. It has nothing in common also with weak-kneed irresolution, and certainly nothing whatever to do with that meanness of spirit which in some popular novels is made to masquerade in the guise of Christian meekness. The meek man in Christ's sense of the word has surrendered himself to

the Divine Power that has made and fashioned him. His aim, however faulty he may be in his fulfilment of it, is to do God's will, and not to achieve his own individual rights or vindicate his own individual claims or dignities. So far as he succeeds in realising the grace of meekness he becomes forgetful of self and more and more bent on the accomplishment of God's will, whether in Church or State, in society, or in the guild or community of which he is a member. The meek herein are thus the law-abiding, where the law is not a fixed conventional enactment or tradition but an ever-growing manifestation of God's will and righteousness, not only in man's personal life but also in his social and business relations, and in that of his community in its national and international relations. According to the O.T. (Num. xii. 3) Moses was the meekest man on all the earth. It is significant that the meekest man of ancient Israel was also its strongest, the most willing and humblest servant of God's will and the greatest lawgiver of the ancient world.

And as of Moses so it holds true of all men: to be truly meek one must be strong; for the meek man has forsworn his own private aims and personal ambitions, and resolved to follow God's will at all costs and at all hazards. Thus meekness requires courage, singleness of aim, self-control, self-sacrifice. And to such men the promise of Christ naturally is: "The meek"—that is, the willing servants of God's will—"shall inherit the earth."

It is not to the arrogant, the high-handed, the rapa-

cious; it is not to the so-called supermen in this or other lands, that the earth and all that is therein shall ultimately belong, but to the humble and the meek: to those who, having sought first and above all the kingdom of God and His righteousness, find that to this eternal heritage there is added another they did not seek—even the heritage of this world and all that is best therein.

Even in the domain of nature this law holds to some extent: "The meek shall inherit the earth." The untamable monsters of the historic foretime failed to maintain themselves, and their place was taken by animals of a more amenable type. In the present day this process is still more effectual; for the great carnivora and reptiles that refuse to part with their savagery are being steadily exterminated. At no distant date all animals of this contumacious type will inherit—not the earth—but only iron cages in zoological collections. And should there be certain castes or communities amongst men, hopeless alike in their savagery and morals, they will no doubt inherit in due time—not the earth—but an enclosure in wired reserves or a house of bondage and fetters of steel. The analogies of the past all point in this direction. The ruthless empires of ancient days fell successively before more law-abiding powers, till at last Rome, which was the most law-respecting nation of pre-Christian times, notwithstanding its severities, became the inheritor of the ancient world. At present the whole world is threatened with a reversion to those old and evil days, when might claimed only

too successfully to be right, and when the weak, the few in number, the friendless and the destitute, were the helpless thralls of the merciless and the strong. But the promise abideth sure : " Blessed are the meek : for they shall inherit the earth." Of these great words an American humorist made use in order to give point to a jest at the expense of England, when he said, " The English must be a very meek people, seeing they inherit so large a part of the earth." But herein Mark Twain expressed unwittingly a great truth. For it is just because that Great Britain, despite its many grievous sins of intemperance, impurity, covetousness, and unfaithfulness to plighted word on the part of corporations of employers and employed ; it is just because that Great Britain, we repeat, has, in spite of these grievous derelictions, been obedient more than any other nation in the present or the past to the higher light vouchsafed it by God, alike in its internal and international relations, and has more than any other people striven to be faithful to its covenants, to be just to the weak, a stronghold to the needy in their distress, a champion of the oppressed, that in its case the promise of this beatitude, " The meek shall inherit the earth," has in some measure been fulfilled and justified.

In conclusion, I cannot sum up better the promise of these two great beatitudes than in the words of St. Paul. If as individuals and if as a nation we learn to be humble in heart and manifest this humility in our conduct and character as willing servants of our God, then we can claim as ours the wondrous promise

set forth by the Apostle: "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

IV.

THE ETERNAL REFUGE.

"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."—DEUT. xxxiii. 27.

THESE words, which are among the noblest in the Old Testament, were addressed to a nation which had just completed a toilsome and troubled pilgrimage of forty years through the wilderness on its way to the Promised Land. Through all these years the great lawgiver and prophet had been their leader, and now that he was about to be taken from them the assurance is given them, "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."

Since the words of our text referred originally to the hope of the nation, let us first consider them in regard to the nation and to humanity at large. The nation is a creation of God as truly as the family, and the power that seeks to destroy any right development of the national life and character is sprung not from God, but from the pit. Ancient Rome was the enemy of the nationalities it conquered. For centuries it suppressed or extinguished their individual characteristics, and sought to replace them with the specific

features of a single universal Empire. But the artificial unity thus created was in due time broken up, its power shattered, and then, at last, the various nations, released from its bondage, awoke to the consciousness of their several tasks and destinies. To such a consciousness of its corporate life and responsibilities a nation rises, not in the slumbrous days of its prosperity and ease, but in critical seasons, when its very existence is menaced by grave social troubles and changes from within, as our own nation is this day, or by great political dangers from without, as it was in the recent war. In our own day there is hardly a nation on the earth which has not been threatened with a bondage unspeakably worse than that of the nations which Rome had brought beneath its yoke, and never was there a time in the annals of the past so full of stress and storm as the past five years, when the freest and noblest of the nations were engaged in mortal strife with the powers of reaction and darkness, when wrong was apparently triumphant, and the earth, throughout its entire compass, was darkened by moral eclipse.

Then, if ever in the history of the world, it seemed that men's hearts might tremble or fail them for fear, but that there was One that keeps sleepless watch and ward, and makes even the wrath of man to praise Him. The destinies of the world are in His keeping, and there with untroubled hearts we can safely leave them. As God commits unto us our tasks, so it is ours to commit unto Him our cares. Only with our own immediate tasks need we concern ourselves; if we are faithful

therein we need fear no evil—"The eternal God is our refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." It is not our councils and institutions and forms of government that are maintaining the world. The best of them are but a pale reflection of the goodness that God designs for all men. The world is not our world, but God's world. To despair, then, of His purposes is sheer faithlessness, and to proclaim that His designs can only issue in failure betrays not only shallowness and arrogance of mind but also a personal disloyalty to the Divine Being that is shaping the world's destinies and leading it to its blessed consummation. In that world-wide strife to which we were irrevocably committed, we could not look backward. With strong confidence we could appeal to Him in whose hands are the issues of all things, and make this appeal, though deeply conscious that pride and self-conceit and greed and selfishness had often debased our international policy, and for these sins our God would bring us into judgment even unto the third and fourth generation. Wherever our policies are selfish, wherever we shape the course of events purely to suit our own pleasure or aggrandisement, we sow at the same time the seed of ultimate corruption and failure; all that bears the brand of selfishness must perish. Only that which is marked with the impress of the Cross endures to everlasting.

Again in times of critical strain and trial, that threaten with revolutionary change or dissolution, not our national policies and destinies, but our religious and

social creeds and practice, we can fall back in the spirit of living faith on the assurance, "The eternal God is our refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." In our religious beliefs we have made tremendous strides in the last half-century. Some fifty years ago or more the Bishops of our Church met in solemn conclave to pass a resolution that no candidate should be admitted to Holy Orders unless he professed his belief in the six days' account of Creation. Happily, this unchristian attempt to fetter opinion was defeated, and to-day no Bishop on the Bench would himself accept the first chapters of Genesis as a document to be taken literally. Hence every attempt to fetter spiritual liberty and the work of research—and such attempts are being made, and will be made—should be resisted and fought as an evil thing. Change is as inevitable in theological theories as in any other department of human life; where there is no progress there is stagnation and death. Our religious creeds and theories grow with our growing experience and knowledge. The more precisely, therefore, we define our doctrines at any single era, the sooner they become outworn and obsolete; for precision and analogous intellectual distinctions, being based on inadequate experience, are temporary, while the truths they faintly seek to adumbrate are eternal. St. Paul declares that in this world we can only see truths through a mirror darkly. In countries and Churches where partial expressions of the truth have been identified with the Faith itself, the certainties of religion have often been

rejected as outworn superstitions, and that just because they have been identified with their temporary and inadequate expressions. If a Church identifies itself wholly with the past, it can only appeal to the unprogressive members in the nation—to the unthinking, the unreceptive, the mentally indolent, and the morally invertebrate. With forms and ceremonies ever growing more elaborate and more mediæval, with appeals to sentiment and imagination, it may maintain its power over these stationary or reactionary elements of society, but the true life of the nation will pass beyond its control, and will derive its moral sustenance and inspiration from other and living sources. Let us, therefore, not be discouraged in these days of intellectual unrest. Even the most radical doubts and changes are often symptoms, not of decay and death, but of growth and life, and point to the removal of "those things that are shaken . . . that those things which cannot be shaken may remain." The object of such unsettling is that we may be settled on surer foundations, and find our refuge and our strength not in this or that theory of Divine truth and righteousness, but in the present and living experience of God Himself. "The eternal God is our refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."

If from the intellectual unrest that pervades the life of the nation we turn to the still greater unrest that pervades its social and industrial life, we are confronted with a host of problems, moral and economical, arising from the neglect of the rightful claims of labour in the past. In the face of such inevitable changes breaking,

as it would seem, with much that was best and permanent in the past, we can face the future calmly, if we know by a living experience that God is righteous and that accordingly He will vindicate all that is righteous in the claims of our brethren. For the younger among us these problems are trumpet-calls to make themselves ready to meet these new developments in the teaching of the Master, and, recognising the spirit of idealism, the self-sacrifice and sense of brotherhood that have inspired the trade unions in their noblest hours, to claim them as part and parcel of the Commonwealth of God. But there are limits beyond which our sympathies may not go. With the trade unions working for better wages and better conditions of labour and higher standards of life, every fair-minded man must sympathise, so long as the trade unions proceed by constitutional methods. But what are we to say of the present action of the railway unions? Their demands may be perfectly just or they may not—that, however, is not the question before us—but their methods are wholly wrong. When they fail to get their own way by constitutional methods they resort to what is really violence; they put in force what they call lightning or paralysing strikes. Most of the strikers are good fellows, but most of them are entirely ignorant of the policy they are pursuing—a policy which is really engineered by men in the background, whose trade is revolution and whose object is anarchy. In any case, the strikers have put themselves hopelessly in the wrong by forcing this war on the community before the whole

matter could be threshed out in the light of day, and brought to a decision by rational and constitutional methods. A small section of the nation is striving to coerce forty millions of their fellow-subjects; they are trying to impose their rule on the State, and by the organisation of chaos in the vital industries of the nation, such as coal-mining and transport, they are, like highwaymen of old, trying to compel the nation to stand and deliver, and to give them all they choose to ask. But the success they aim at they will not gain; the nation will not tolerate a rule of force, whether it comes from without or within. England with its Allies has overthrown Prussianism in Europe, but not in order to cultivate it within its own borders. It has put down King and Kaiser on the Continent, but not in order to set up pinchbeck Hohenzollerns and Hapsburgs inside the realm.

It is now time for the Government to redress the evils fostered undoubtedly by itself and by past Governments. To the trade unions the Government has recently acted as foolish parents do to spoilt children; they have given them everything they have asked for irrespective of the rightness or wrongness of the request. The Government should learn to treat them henceforward as moral and responsible corporations, and not as something non-moral, and so beyond the reach of law. Let me explain what I mean. Every man agrees that the individual should be subject to the claims of the moral law. That has been admitted since the Christian era. And now, after two thousand years

and the worst war in all history, the brotherhood of nations have learnt and are seeking to establish a few elementary propositions with regard to international law—to wit, that the nation as well as the individual must be subject to the claims of the moral law; that it must not use violence unless with the approval of the League of Nations, and that it must keep its covenants. It is not necessary to expatiate further in this direction. But now that the world requires alike the individual and the nation to submit to the claims of the moral law, will the people of England suffer corporations and trade unions within it to be exempt from this law and left free to practise the vices of Prussianism? It is surely time now to bring all these corporations to a sense of their responsibilities, to remind them that they are bound just as much as the individual to keep their pledged word and covenant, and to enforce their claims not by violence, but through the legitimate authorities established by the nation—the highest being the great Council of the nation which meets in Westminster. Accordingly, one of the first duties of Parliament is to repeal the Trades Disputes Act of 1906, an Act which exempted the trade unions and every official of a trade union, when acting officially, from punishment for overt breaches of the law of the land. Some critics have stated that this Act sets the trade unions above law. But this no authority in the world can do. There is nothing above law. As Hooker finely says: "All things in heaven and earth do her homage; the very least as feeling her care, the greatest as not exempted

from her power." But, if this Act does not place the trade unions above law, it must place them below it. Are they then something inhuman, something brutish, something wholly irrational? Or worse, are they demonic agencies, consciously rebelling against every law that limits the range of their self-will and self-indulgence? Surely the trade unions should be the first to demand the removal of this Act from the Statute Book of the nation, and claim that they should be adjudged by the same moral laws as individuals and States. It is high time that the unions should learn that they are responsible and moral corporations and be dealt with accordingly. And it is the duty of every right-minded man and woman to rally with sympathy, and where necessary with service, to the help of the State in its present need.

As regards the nationalisation of minerals and means of transport, which has been put forward as the remedy of all our Labour troubles, the nation is probably now disillusioned. With unblushing hypocrisy or abysmal ignorance of the psychology of man, many trade union leaders have maintained that men would work loyally for the State, but could not be expected to exert themselves to swell the profits of the private employer. This seemed very plausible; but the action of the railway leaders has shattered this fallacy, for the railways are at the present day practically nationalised, and yet the unions are more defiant of the State than they were of the private companies.

Those of us who have passed the twelfth lustrum or

more may live to see only the early and unsatisfactory stages of the spiritual transformation of our social life, but not its full development; and so according to the measure of our faith may regard it with very different feelings and hopes. Some will look askance on these movements as dangerous novelties, as dislodging all that they have fought for as good and true in the past, and as menacing with licence and anarchy all that is well ordered in the present. These will be thankful that, since the world with its altering ways is no longer congenial to them, the time of their departure is at hand. But, while many of the elders may be out of sympathy with the large reforms looming on the near horizon, others no less advanced in years will greet them in the spirit of a great faith, and only regret that years and infirmity preclude their taking any active share in the initiation of this new age. Hence, while they rejoice that the matin bell is summoning their younger brethren to labours so full of hope, they are well satisfied that the vesper bell is calling them to rest—the short rest that precedes their renewed labours in a larger sphere and for still nobler issues in the eternal kingdom of God.

Once more in times of stress to ourselves, of personal trial and personal loss, we can rest on the assurance, "The eternal God is our refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." Our outlook is not confined to this world. Our life and hope in God are not circumscribed within certain narrow limits of time and space—for we are related to Him as His own children, and,

accordingly, death cannot have dominion over us. As we do not pass from the protection of God when we move from one land to another, no more do we move beyond His mercy and loving-kindness when we pass from this world to the next. To know God is at the same time to know immortality, and as we grow in the knowledge of God so do we grow in the assurance of the blessed hope beyond the grave. But it may be urged that though this Christian doctrine of a future life is an immeasurable comfort for all those who have served the Master here, what consolation does it offer in respect to the numberless young and noble lives that have fallen in this war, large numbers of whom cannot be described as religious and many of whom were wholly unprepared for death? Even in their case it is true—"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." And this we say, not that we think lightly of the present life as a time of probation for the future, not that we would belittle in the least the exceeding sinfulness of sin and the absolute certainty of its punishment here and hereafter, nor yet ignore the possibility that some impenitent souls may persist even after death in their wrongness and so bring about their annihilation. Notwithstanding all this, we feel assured that there can be nothing better for the soul of man than to fall into the hands of the Living God. For there is none who loves us as He loves. It cannot, then, be an evil thing, even for the most undeserving of us, to be brought more immediately under His redeeming love and care. Nay, it must be the very

best thing possible to find ourselves face to face with our Father in heaven, stripped at last of every covering and deceit, wherewith we fain would hide our hearts alike from Him and from ourselves. The only awful thing for the human soul would be to pass into a world where God was not, into a world where only force and evil, sin and horror, blasted forms of being and eternal nightmares of existence reigned supreme. That would be horror indeed. But not such is the Christian hope. "The eternal God is our refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." It is, therefore, a blessed thing that from our God, the God we love and worship, there is no refuge for any human soul—there can be none—save in God Himself.

V.

THE WINNING OF THE SOUL.

"In your patience ye shall win your souls."—LUKE xxi. 19.

"He that is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much."—LUKE xvi. 10.

"If ye have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?"—LUKE xvi. 12.

"Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing that ye have your own selves for a better possession and an abiding one."—HEB. x. 34 (R.V. Marg.).

THESE verses do not at first sight appear to be clearly connected, and yet, when we study them, we find that the two statements of our Lord in St. Luke and that of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews deal with one and the selfsame subject—and this subject is the winning or the losing of the soul and the means whereby these issues are brought about.

The winning or the saving of man's soul is then our subject. But, first of all, let us at the outset define what the saving of the soul is not.

Now the saving of the soul is not the mere preservation of the soul in its present actual stage of attainment, however high it may be, even if this stage of attainment were secured to all eternity. This is not the Christian doctrine of the salvation of the soul. If this were the

Christian doctrine, then such immortality would be undesirable; for it would be nothing more than the preservation of the soul in a primary stage of its progress, and the eternal perpetuation of this primary stage. The immortality of the soul would then be the everlastingness of the mediocre, the imperfect, the commonplace, and an immortality of such a nature could only issue in an eternal ennui in the case of those who were so unhappy as to attain to it.

The salvation of the soul is an end set before us by Christ: it is a thing to be achieved, a thing to be won. Nay more, though we have souls to begin with, these souls are not ours till we make them so: "By your endurance ye shall win your souls." But the common idea is that the human soul is a spiritual entity, a thing complete in itself, created and coming into being as we come into this world, a thing which we are to nurture and discipline, and which attains its perfectionment when we leave this world. But this is not the teaching of Christ. There is no completeness or finality reached by the soul during this life, or at its close. These spiritual things, called souls, are entrusted to us as bundles of potentialities—that is, things capable of realisation and growth, and not as completed actualities. God entrusts our souls to us, that we through the help of Christ may make them what He would have them to be, and by so doing may make them our own. Now in the teaching of our Lord this idea is emphasised. "In your endurance ye shall win your souls." These words clearly recognise that a man has a right to his

soul, but that he cannot realise that right save through effort and endurance. Again, while elsewhere in Luke (xvi. 12) our Lord strongly affirms that a man's soul is his own, He just as strongly lays stress on the fact that, if a man is not faithful, his soul will be taken from him: "If ye have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?" Or, speaking from another standpoint elsewhere: "What will it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

But these words of our Lord call for further comment. In them two things are placed in vivid contrast: the first thing is, "that which is another's"; the second is, "that which is your own." Now the latter remarkable phrase, "that which is your own," is Christ's definition of the human soul. And over against the soul of man—"that which is your own," Christ sets everything else in this world and calls it "that which is another's." What an illuminating judgment is here pronounced on the current conceptions of this world. Wealth, talents, high birth, rank, strength physical or intellectual, power, beauty—all the so-called possessions of this world, its most coveted and desirable things, the outward things which in the estimation of the world alone count, are just those which our Lord singles out as the unimportant—nay, more, which He simply designates as "that which is another's"; in other words, they are only temporary possessions, which may be recalled at any moment, and which no man can retain beyond the narrow handbreadth of time allotted to

him here. Sooner or later every one of these will, nay must, be taken from him. Of not one of these is man the owner. But in strong contrast with these things of time, Christ places man's soul, and defines it in the striking words, "that which is your own." We find the same strong contrast in Heb. x. 34, "Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing that ye have your own selves for a better possession and an abiding one." The soul is then, as set over against other so-called possessions, the one possession here on earth—not that a man has as his own, but that a man can, if he is faithful, make his own.

According to the teaching of Christ, then, the salvation of the soul here and hereafter should be the chief and primary aim of all men, and the soul is of course to be taken as embracing the whole personality with its powers of thought, will, and emotion. The saving of man in his entire personality alike for time and for eternity is the object of Christ's coming: the strengthening of the personality, the enriching of it in every direction is what God has willed for man. How different is this noble conception from that of Ancient Buddhism, which had for its aim the destruction of the personality of man, or from that of the ascetic, which aims at starving his personality. Buddhism taught that life was an intolerable burden, and that the object of the Buddhist saint was to get quit absolutely of life itself. According to this peculiar creed only the perfect saint could attain to this consummation, whereas the worldly, the vicious, and the imperfect were doomed

to be born again and go through other forms of animal existence.

It is almost incomprehensible that such a creed should win adherents here and there in modern Christendom. The fact that it does so is evidence of senile decay in modern society. At all periods even of the most abounding vitality there are individual decadents, to whom the world is a weariness as they are a weariness to themselves and to the world, and who would gladly be extinguished fully and for ever. Buddhism as a metaphysical system is unintelligible, while its claims as an ethical system are unrealisable. With its metaphysical system we have here no concern, but it is otherwise with its ethical system. Buddhism puts forward an extremely high ethical standard. But since the Buddhist saint had no divine strength to look to, since he believed that even the gods were only temporary beings who would die like himself, and could neither help nor hinder his salvation, he was forced to rely purely on his own strength. How any Buddhist, then, could claim to have fulfilled the law of perfect truth, of perfect purity, of perfect love, is beyond the limits of human comprehension. Hence the complete Buddhist saint was just as much outside the range of possibility as the wise man of the Stoics. But unless the Buddhist saint did so and *in this life*, he could not attain to the blessedness he sought, namely, extinction, or absorption into the unconscious. Hence the natural conclusion is that, since none could realise the perfect life set forth by Buddha, then none could arrive at the

blessedness promised by Buddha, *i.e.* release from all life.

It is not strange that Ancient Buddhism, owing to its radical incoherencies, speedily allied itself with every form of superstition in the East.

Returning to the teaching of Christ, we recognise at once that to achieve the standard He sets before men is impossible in the brief measure of this life. At the best this stage of our life is but elementary; it is but the kindergarten of God's school of souls. Hence it is that the Christian looks forward to the life beyond the grave, through the endless ages of which he shall grow in purity and truth and knowledge and wisdom and power and love, and advance to the perfection of the Godhead—the ideal which Christ puts before His disciples: "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." A blessed immortality is a necessary postulate of the Christian Faith, since it aims at nothing less than perfection of character and completeness of personality, and neither of these can be reached in our life on earth.

Before we go further let us now sum up what we have learnt of the teaching of Christ as regards man's soul. First, He has taught us that all our possessions save the soul are not really possessions, but only temporary holdings, of which we are tenants at will and may be dispossessed at any moment; secondly, that even the soul is not at the outset our own in fee-simple or in perpetuity, but that it can be made ours as a κτῆμα ἐς ἀεί, a possession for evermore. And thirdly,

that to secure this possession a man must grow morally, spiritually, and mentally, with the growth of years and experience, and that this growth is an endless one, since the standard set by Christ is the perfectness of God Himself.

Since, then, the winning of our souls is a matter of such transcendent moment, how is this winning to be effected? Our Lord's words are, "In your patience"—your endurance, your persistent continuance in well-doing—"ye shall win your souls"; and again, "He that is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much, and he that is unrighteous in a very little is unrighteous also in much. . . . If ye have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?"

"He that is faithful in a very little"; in these slighting terms our Lord describes our temporary possessions here, whether these amount, as in one of Christ's parables, to one talent or two talents or to five. However great they are according to the standard of this world, they are only a very little when compared with the spiritual possessions which a man has potentially in his own soul—that is, in the possession of himself, which he wins through being a faithful servant of Christ.

The winning or the losing of the soul is then the question of supremest importance for man, just as the winning or the losing of the soul of England is even now the supremest question of the hour for England and her Empire—an infinitely harder and greater conquest to achieve than that already won in the war just closed.

But if we can win our souls we can also lose them: if we can come to possess them, we can also lose possession of them.

What are we to understand thereby? What else than that, if we fail to gain possession of our own soul, then our soul will become the victim and thrall of something else, which should not have the mastery over it. Thus we speak of a man possessed by evil thoughts, tempers, passions, vices—their victim, dominated apparently by the will of something outside himself. In the Middle Ages it was customary to speak of a man as being obsessed by evil things or of his being possessed by them. The same is true to-day. Obsession (from the Latin word *obsidere*, to besiege) means the besieging of a man by evil thoughts, temptations, spirits. If the man yields to or is overcome by any of these evil things that are besieging him, then obsession passes into possession. The evil spirit that was before fighting the man from without and besieging him, has at length won possession and established itself within the man. The man now is not obsessed but possessed, whether by the evil spirit of lust, or drunkenness, or lying, or greed, or ungovernable temper, or sheer selfishness. Such an evil spirit our Lord likens (Luke xi. 21) to a strong man armed, keeping firm and undisturbed hold of his captive—that is, the man's soul—till a stronger than he, namely Christ Himself, comes and drives out the evil spirit and sets free the captive soul. One man may be possessed by one such evil spirit, another by several, while another may be possessed by such a number that,

if their wretched victim were to declare his true name, it would be Legion—the number of evil powers that possess him. Such a man has wholly ceased to belong to himself, he has completely lost self-mastery, his soul is the thrall of Satan, his personality is partially or wholly destroyed—at all events for the present; for even such lost souls are not outside the redemptive and saving power of Christ.

How then, we ask again, is a man to win his soul? Our Lord replies: By faithfulness in the everyday things of life—"He that is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much." If a man desires in all sincerity to win his soul, he is not required to make some attempt above his capacity, or outside the sphere of the duties which God has appointed to him, or to seek for some great and extraordinary occasion on which to display his faithfulness; nay, he has just to turn with all his heart, or with all the heart he can muster at the time, from the sin which, he knows, is besetting and destroying him, and this first step amounts to a decision to be Christ's disciple. Now, to put the decision of discipleship to the test is not difficult with the guidance of God's Spirit in our heart, and life's next duty pressing on our notice for fulfilment. Christ's call comes to us in the next duty that claims us. How shall we answer it? The common occasions and duties of life are the sphere in which this faithfulness to Christ is to be exercised. Not by self-imposed or self-devised tasks, but by the fulfilment of our ordinary duties and of the small and ever-changing claims that others have upon

us—for these duties which God has imposed can discipline the soul with a thoroughness, a searchingness, and an inevitableness that no self-imposed discipline can; and if loyally faced and fulfilled, however imperfectly, these will in due course endow us with a measure of self-mastery and Christian character that no fixed and familiar routine of monastic or conventual duties can possibly achieve.

Faithfulness in the small things of life calls for a continuous exercise of the spiritual element in man. Thus the discharge of the daily duties of life in the Spirit of Christ forms the spiritual discipline designed for us by God Himself, and since each soul differs from every other, it is a different discipline in each case. By this discipline the will is gradually strengthened, the motives purified, and the heart more and more set on things above, while the unruly tempers are curbed and mastered, the uncharitable thoughts expelled, the impure tendencies extinguished, and pride and greed and selfishness dislodged from man's heart, and replaced by the Christian graces of self-mastery and purity, of humility and love. It is in the ordinary and commonplace matters of everyday life that the greatest dangers beset us. It is in these, where the danger is generally hidden and therefore most menacing, that we must make our stand, resist our enemy, carry his positions, achieve our victories, and win our souls. Thus it is in the unpretentious and unromantic heroisms of the daily round, in the common tasks of the ordinary life, in the services tendered by us almost unconsciously,

and accepted by others almost without recognition, that most of us have to win our souls.

And as we surrender ourselves to God's will herein, we come to possess ourselves more and more, to have life in greater fullness and richness of expression, and ever through the ages to have it more abundantly.

We have a perfect analogy to the spiritual life in the disciplining of the actual soldier—in the constant drillings, the physical exercises, the forced marches, the endless daily lessons, which teach at once self-sacrifice, self-mastery, and self-possession. To how many of the younger soldiers must this discipline seem in great measure a mere waste of energy, a flat unprofitableness. But the veteran soldier is wiser. He has learnt that he that is faithful in that which is very little will be faithful when the supreme crisis arrives. And so it was in the case of the four divisions of British soldiers who bore the brunt of Germany's onslaught at Mons and elsewhere, who by their steadfastness, their loyalty to their high traditions, to the claims of truth and duty, saved at that critical moment the cause of righteousness and civilisation, inspired England with a new spirit, and awaked our nation to a consciousness of the need of winning its soul in the Great War. But there is a still greater war which England has to wage in order to win its soul. For in these so-called days of peace it is obsessed, if not in fact possessed, by the demons of greed, dishonesty, lust, and injustice.

In conclusion, great and divine principles are always at stake in the simplest claims that life makes upon us,

and if we are faithful herein, faithful in that which appears to be very little, our Lord assures us that we shall be faithful in that which is much: faithful and undismayed, even when the dreadest emergencies of life burst upon us unawares. Walking with our God in the humblest occasions of life, committing ourselves more and more unreservedly to the guidance of His Spirit, we shall fear no evil, however terrible be the storms and the waterfloods that threaten; nay more, when the last summons calls us to depart from this life, we shall set forth and go, not with fear, but with quiet confidence, through death's dark valley—the valley that lies between this fleeting home of our childhood and the home of our fuller and ever-growing life in the eternal City of God.

VI.

THE DESTINY OF MAN.

"Take ye away therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him that hath the ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, . . . but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away."—MATT. xxv. 28, 29.

THIS parable deals with the principle which regulates the distribution of rewards and punishments in the kingdom of God, and this principle, to put it in the simplest terms, is that a man is judged according to the use he makes of the means at his disposal. In this parable we are told that a man who was about to make a journey into a far country called his servants together and delivered unto them his goods, to one five talents, to another two, to another one, and so on, in various measures, according to the several ability of each.[1] Only three cases are mentioned, but these are sufficient to illustrate the principle before us. So the two servants first mentioned took the talents, and traded with them, but the third went away and digged in the earth and hid his lord's money. And then after

[1] This proportion of the talent to the several abilities of each is only partially true in this world. As the world grows towards its ideal this proportion should be more fully realised.

a long time their lord returned and took account of his servants. And the first two servants showed how through their labours they had gained respectively five and two talents more. And their lord commended each in the same terms: "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." And then he who had received the one talent came and said: "Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou didst not sow, and gathering where thou didst not scatter: and I was afraid, and went away and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, thou hast that is thine." Thereupon his lord replied: "Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not: . . . thou oughtest therefore to have placed my money with the bankers, and then at my coming I should have received back mine own with interest. Take ye therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him that hath the ten talents."

Now, at the outset, it will be helpful to single out the chief truths enforced in this parable and subsequently to treat them more fully as they arise. The parable, of course, applies to every child of man. First, this parable teaches that every man has, to begin with, a certain natural ability—that is, if we translate ancient thought into modern, the gifts and powers coming to him through his heredity; next, that God entrusts to every man certain talents other and beyond his natural ability—that is, again translating ancient into modern thought, the gifts and potentialities that come to him

through his environment; thirdly, that by the faithful use of his heredity and environment a man gains talents for God—that is, a redeemed and enlarged personality alike in himself and in his brethren; fourthly, in so doing he becomes the actual possessor of the gifts coming to him through his heredity and his environment, and, above all, he becomes the possessor of himself and of his brethren—redeemed and glorified both in this world and in eternity.

Now let us return to the study of the parable in detail. First, the phrase "his several ability" and the term "talents" claim our attention. How are these to be distinguished? The first phrase denotes the natural ability which each man has by heredity. It is his to use or abuse this inherited ability, to make it his own or to destroy it wholly. Each babe is, to begin with, a bundle of possibilities or potentialities bound together in one personality; whether these will be realised and become his own, or be lost and destroyed, depends on his own conduct. Such, then, being the natural ability spoken of in the parable—that is, what we nowadays call heredity—it follows that the talents are everything above and beyond this natural ability; in other words, the things that are offered to us through our environment. These are in the first instance the religious, moral, and intellectual influences that surround us from our childhood onwards; and not these only, but the opportunities put within our reach for the acquisition of wealth, knowledge, influence, and other powers which, though not in themselves spiritual, can be consecrated

to high and spiritual ends. Thus Christ's interests are entrusted to His servants, and His kingdom can neither grow nor even continue to exist without their co-operation. And, as the interests of the kingdom are committed to His servants, every servant is entrusted with the powers necessary to fulfil his own share of the work. These naturally vary. Only a little can be put into the hands of the servant who can use but a little, while larger powers are given to him who can adequately wield them. Each gets in the parable what he can best manage, and none is expected to produce more than his ability and talents justify.

Having thus divided his goods, the lord in the parable went off into another country and stayed away for a long season. Time is given to remedy mistakes, to get over bad beginnings, to learn wisdom. God wishes His servants to succeed, to surmount their failures, and to attain the highest possible for them. And this joy of the master over his servants' achievements is well set forth in his response to the first: "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." The smaller achievement of the second servant wins just as generous appreciation as the greater achievement of the first; for he was equally faithful in the measure of his powers. It is the fidelity, and not the largeness of the gains acquired, on which the judgment of the servants is based. Thus the judgment is according to equity and not, after the vulgar fashion of this world, according to the success

or magnitude of the work achieved. The praise "good and faithful" will be pronounced on many who in the world's eyes have seemed to be sheer failures, for there is none so generous in His moral estimate of His servants as God Himself. Thus the lord in the parable appears in a most favourable light in reference to these servants, but his generosity and disinterestedness come into still bolder relief as the scrutiny of his servants advances.

Next comes the man who had received one talent. It can hardly be without significance that the defaulting one among the servants was just the man who had received one talent and no more. This does not imply that the greatest unfaithfulness is generally found among the least talented; for too many of the most highly placed and favoured among men fail altogether to use aright the powers which have come to them through their heredity and environment. Rather the judgment of the man of one talent is brought forward in order that none may excuse his indolence and sloth on the ground that, as so little has been committed to his charge, it boots not at all how he administers that little. Herein the doctrine is enforced that the obligation of service admits of no exception on the part of any, and that no excuse for negligence will be accepted, even when the power to serve appears infinitesimal, just as the most infinitesimal service will be fully acknowledged when the ability to serve is correspondingly limited. "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." It

is not the more or the less that has been gained by the servants, but the faithfulness with which the entrusted talents have been administered, that distinguishes in character one servant from another and will hereafter distinguish them in doom and destiny.

Moreover, it is clear that, if the world is to grow purer, truer, nobler, it is only by awakening such men as these, by showing them that it is not by the great and splendid deeds of the many-talented few, but by the patient, unobtrusive faithfulness of the one-talented many, that the world is to be won for God. God's Kingdom cannot advance in the individual, in the family, in the State, or in the brotherhood of nations, as it should advance, without every one of us. God has need of us, an imperative need, of each one of us. Hence none of us, even the most slightly endowed, can be commonplace, if he will but do his duty. We have severally our own work to do, which can be done by us, and by no one else; yea, and, if left undone, must in a certain sense be left undone for evermore.

Nevertheless, it is undoubtedly true that, just because he has but little, the man of one talent is more tempted than others to bury his talent. He is apt to waste in idle dreams whatever moral energy he possesses; to imagine that, if he had large means, if his circumstances were more favourable, his powers greater, he would meet faithfully and generously the claims of God, and the claims that his own people, his neighbours, and the community have upon him. And so, because he cannot do as much, or as well, as others, he will not

do what he can, and he declares that the powers which God has given him through heredity, and the environment, spiritual, intellectual, and social, in which God has placed him, are exactly those which are least suited for him to use effectively in life. His ambition outruns his talents, and, while he regards with envy the larger gifts of his neighbours, he fails to use his own. And because he cannot do a great deal he gives up trying to do the little he can ; because he cannot lead a movement, or play a conspicuous part in it, he declines to have any share at all in it ; because he cannot speak as well or forcibly as his neighbour for some good cause of God or of man, he remains silent altogether. And so, crushed with the sense of his own mediocrity, he sullenly withdraws from his divinely appointed sphere of duty—dissatisfied with himself possibly, more assuredly dissatisfied both with his neighbours and with God. Instead of a worker he becomes a carping and ill-conditioned critic. Seeking to hide from himself the sense of his own insignificance, his own good-for-nothingness, he decries and vilifies the characters and achievements of his fellow-men ; for the bitterest critics are always those who do least, or adventure least, in the service of God and man. By such criticism they try to justify their own slothfulness, their own lack of faith and adventure, and, refusing to bear their part in the world's struggle, the world's labour-pains and agony, the world's progress and redemption, they seek to live to themselves—away from stress and strain and care.

In this effort to justify his derelictions in the sphere of

duty the man of one talent in the parable is ready to blame everybody but himself, but, above all, he blames his lord: "I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou didst not sow, and gathering where thou didst not scatter." This insolent attack on his lord is not a mere hasty utterance of the moment, but the deliberate expression of the man's settled state of mind towards his lord. The fault, of course, lies with his lord, not with himself. His lord, he believes, is grudging in what he gives, greedy of what he can get; extreme to mark what is done amiss, quick to take advantage of the least shortcoming or failure, and always sure to exact the uttermost farthing. The ill-doer is, as a rule, the ill-deemer. How unpardonably wrong this servant was in so estimating the character of his lord we have already seen in the generous recognition with which the other servants were greeted, and this we shall see more clearly as we advance.

But before we proceed we should do well to observe how severe our Lord always is on such a character as the slothful servant in this parable. And yet this servant was not a gross sinner; he had not wasted his master's goods like the unjust steward, nor spent the portion of his inheritance in riotous living like the prodigal, nor incurred the irredeemable debt of ten thousand talents like the unmerciful servant. He had not even squandered his talent nor refused to acknowledge whence he received it. But—and herein is the head and front of his offending—he had done nothing with his talent. Now the sinner that Christ most frequently

denounces is just the laggard, the slacker, or the man who has done nothing. While the Mosaic law in the Decalogue characteristically condemns those who had done evil, Christ characteristically condemns those who had not done good. Thus, in the parable of the Good Samaritan, it is the priest and the Levite that are held up to reprobation, since they refused their help, and passed by on the other side. In the parable of Dives and Lazarus, it is Dives that was condemned to the fires of judgment, because, though no evil is recorded against him, he failed to succour the beggar who lay at his gate full of sores. And in the parable before us it is the man of one talent that is cast into the outer darkness, not because he was a notorious sinner, but because he had done nothing with his talent beyond going and deliberately burying it.

At the close of his indictment of his lord, this servant professes to return the talent that had been entrusted to him. This is possible in the earthly story, but it is not possible in its heavenly counterpart. For the capacities, opportunities, graces we fail to use are lost by such disuse, and hence they cannot be returned. This holds true of all living members of the body and mind. They require to be put to service and exercised, else they die. The unused muscle dwindles away and disappears. No surgical operation is required for its removal. Want of use removes it. And similarly in the spiritual world. The capacities for loving and knowing and serving God and man are taken gradually but inexorably from those who fail to use them. And

yet that they are dwarfing their whole nature and destroying the highest and best within them, such offenders do not for a moment imagine. On the contrary, they often believe that they are getting beyond the teachings of religion, that they are growing too competent and sagacious to be any longer subjected to its authority or inconvenienced by its claims. They think that they are wiser now than they were in earlier days. And their assurance of their own superiority grows in the measure of their loss, till at last their spiritual powers are destroyed through disuse—at all events for a time. The lord in the parable does not defend himself against the charges of the unfaithful servant, but answers him out of his own mouth : " Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I did not scatter ; thou oughtest therefore to have placed my money with the bankers, and then on my coming I should have received back mine own with interest."

What Christ meant by the remarkable words " placed my money with the bankers " it is hard to define precisely, though we may gather that their general drift is that where direct opportunities for the use of our talents are not open for us, indirect opportunities for service will never be wanting in the kingdom of God, if we are only in earnest in the wish to use them. In the service of the kingdom there is not only room for, but there is need of, all men that are willing and eager to use their talents in the position to which God has called or shall call them, whether as with the vast majority they have

no duties beyond the narrow circle of the household or the circumscribed routine of their daily occupation, or with the exceptional few their lives form large factors in the history of the nation. Judgment is then pronounced on the unfaithful servant, and his lord issues the command, "Take ye away therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him that hath the ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away."

As we have already dwelt upon the fact that the unused talent is lost by disuse, we can pass on to the command issued with regard to the forfeited talent: "Give it unto him that hath the ten talents." Here we observe that the lord in the parable, so far from being a hard and grasping man, is generous in the extreme; and let us remember that this is Christ's own representation of God. In fact the story is hardly true to experience—the lord in the parable is generous beyond the range of man's generosity; the heavenly meaning has reacted here on the earthly story in order to represent the infinitely generous nature of God. Hence it is that the lord in the parable does not require his servant to return the talents that were entrusted to him, nor yet the further talents his servant had gained in trading, but, with a magnanimity reflecting the Divine, gives them all to his servant to be his own possession. In this way he that receives certain talents as a trust makes these and all other talents he acquires his own by faithful service. He becomes their possessor. The way has been pre-

pared for this idea in the words addressed to his faithful servants, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." In all these cases the narrative travels beyond the parable, and the speaker appears to be, not the earthly householder, but the Divine Master. The joy into which Christ bids His servants enter is that which follows on the right exercise of their best powers in the service of God. Such joy comes to the best men as a surprise; it is the unlooked-for increment that attends on all disinterested service. And yet when such service is rendered in the right spirit, this joy comes by a Divine necessity. By such faithful service men pass from the condition of bond-slaves, as the text has it, into that of sons of the kingdom, and as such they enter into and share in their Master's joy over the increase of the kingdom of truth and purity, of righteousness and love.

Thus Christ's faithful servants become the actual possessors—first, of their inherited abilities; next, of the gifts that come to them through the environment—spiritual, intellectual, and social—in which God has placed them; thirdly, of an incomparably larger personality in themselves and in their brethren; and finally, they become the potential inheritors of both heaven and earth—heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. They are no longer merely tenants at will, as all men are to begin with, but have become actual possessors. At the outset a man is the possessor of nothing whatever—not even of his own soul. Like all things else, he has, as our Lord teaches, to win his soul and become its possessor. If he does not come to

possess his soul, there is only the dread alternative, he must become a thing possessed—possessed by the things beneath him, whether these be things indifferent, such as money or high position, or the praise of men, or things essentially evil, such as lust or lying, drunkenness or hate; and so he loses his mastery over these things and, becoming their bond-slave, loses his soul as well. Let us therefore, my brethren, now be faithful, and if we are faithful, even in our very imperfect and human way, the possession of our souls and of the gifts originally delivered as a trust to us will become already a fact in this life, and none save God can define limits of such possession in the world to come. "Thou hast been faithful," our Lord declares, "thou hast been faithful over a few things. I will set thee over many things." And what those many things are St. Paul sets forth in terms suggestive of unimaginable splendour and greatness: "For all things are yours; . . . whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

VII.

LIFE EVER MORE ABUNDANTLY FOR THE FAITHFUL.

"I have come that they may have life, and may have it abundantly."—JOHN x. 10.

MANY reasons are given in the Bible for our Lord's coming into the world; but in the main they would all agree in this, that His object was to redeem mankind and make them sons and daughters of God.

But of the reasons given there is perhaps none better than that set forth in our text in our Lord's own words: "I have come that they may have life, and may have it abundantly."

Elsewhere the nature of this life is defined in the words: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life." The life, then, which Christ came to give is eternal life. Now what are we to understand by eternal life? To the intelligent reader it is clear that this life eternal is not a mere endless existence, a simple perpetuation of the individual to eternity, a bare unbroken continuity of being. This was the conception that the ancient Greeks con-

nected with their gods—that of immortal youth, but a youth to which they attached no ideas of growth in goodness or truth or any special excellence. Such a life going on in the same monotonous cycles could only issue in an eternal boredom on the part of its unhappy possessors. But the wise men alike amongst the Jews and Greeks knew better. True life was not of this nature. If the moral note was lacking, it was no life at all. Thus Philo (*De Abraham*, § 46), a contemporary of our Lord, wrote: "He that is in truth an Elder is looked on as such not by reason of length of time, but by the praiseworthiness of his life." We have the same thought more finely expressed in the Book of Wisdom iv. 8, 9:

> "Honourable old age is not so by reason of length of time,
> Nor is it reckoned by number of years:
> But understanding is grey hair unto man,
> And an untarnished life is a ripe old age."

The heathen moralists were fully alive to this truth. Thus Plutarch (*Consol. ad Apoll.* c. 17) writes that the true measure of life is to be found in its honourableness, and not in the number of its years; and Seneca (*Ep.* 93) vigorously declares: "Life is long if it is full: if the mind has rendered to itself the good that is its due. . . . Of what avail are eighty years unto a man if spent in indolence? Such a man has not lived, but lingered on in life: he has not died ripe in years, but been long dead."

Eternal life, then, consists not in length of days: it is the life of the Spirit, an actual, present possession, which every one may have here and now, if such pos-

session is his one supreme desire. We reasonably infer that such life can never perish, that it lasts for ever; but this conception of its everlastingness is simply an inference from the nature of this life. We necessarily presuppose its everlastingness, seeing that the soul that is living unto God and in God naturally shares in the everlastingness of God. It is further presupposed by the fact that no soul can attain fully to the blessedness of eternal life in God save through an endless life.

From this life of the spirit we must carefully distinguish the lower varieties of human life—the life of the senses and the life of the intellect. Now some writers of the past generation sought to impress on us how satisfying the early Greeks found the life of nature: they dwelt on their healthy-minded joyousness; they looked back with regret to their pagan creed and the light-heartedness of its votaries. But such a description is a complete misrepresentation of the attitude of the early Greeks to life in their moments of reflection, when the mind was thrown back upon itself and when it asked itself certain disconcerting questions. Thus in the very heyday of Greek civilisation at Athens, its most glorious centre, we find Sophocles declaring:

> "Never to be born were profit beyond count,
> But, being born, to depart at soonest whence we came
> Were the next best thing by far."

We find the same thought in almost identical language in Theognis, and the Greek Anthology is full of passages containing bitter indictments against human life, and longings for its close in death.

There was then no golden age of life in ancient Greece, though some of its writers spoke of such in a mythical foretime, nor has there been such a golden age in any other land or any other time. The golden age for all true souls is in the days that are yet to be.

Now let us consider this desire for death so amply attested not only in the ancient Greek world, but also amongst the five hundred million disciples of Buddhism, and not without its frequent echoes in our Western civilisation of to-day. What does this desire for death and extinction mean? What does it imply? It means just this, that when a man desires death and nothingness, his soul is already in part dead, and it is the partial death in him that desires death in its completeness. When the vital powers are low, a man imagines himself to be weary of life: it is the dying elements in him and not the living that are weary of life. The soul that has life, and life in its best and truest sense, does not long for death, but rather for life and that in greater fulness.

What is it, then, we may ask, drives the suicide to seek death? It is not the life in him that does so; nay, it is some element of death in one of its myriad forms that drives its poor victim into what he fancies is nothingness and annihilation. It is to escape from death that the suicide resorts to death; to escape from the death of failure, illusion, and disappointment; to escape from the death of homelessness, hunger, and friendlessness—the death of criminal deeds and their unfailing nemesis; the death of exhausted passions, of jangled nerves and fevered brain; of unceasing pain

or oncoming madness. Such a soul, being itself distempered, blights everything around it with its own distemper. And so the suicide seeks the darkness as a refuge from the deadly ills that are besetting his every outlook on life. He is a being not only obsessed but already possessed by death. What he calls life is to him a nightmare, a world of horrors from which he would fain escape.

These ills the suicide flees from are not life: they spring mainly from man's abuse of life and in part from imperfections inherent in our present state of being, and not from life itself. What we need is more of life itself—not escape from it. "More life and fuller, that we want."

If the soul is really living, it cannot long for an eternal sleep or death. Its prayer is ever for more life. If we feel aweary of things in general, and imagine we are aweary of life itself, then we are self-deceived: it is of the lack of life that we are weary, of the growing sway and lordship of death. In all the worst troubles of life our supreme need is life. Let us then pray—not for the repose of oblivion, but for the strong pulsation of the divine life within us—for more faith and strength to wage life's battles, and, however sorely smitten, to say, like Sir Andrew Barton in the ancient ballad:

> "'Fight on, my men,' says Sir Andrew Barton,
> 'I am hurt, but I am not slain;
> I'll lay me down and rest awhile,
> And then I'll rise and fight again.'"

Christ gives this life to us in the measure in which

we live unto Him and in Him. He gives it just as soon as we are able to receive it; in fact, He cannot do other than give it to us, when we are ready for it. Faith has the power to requisition the thing it needs, and make that thing its own. But the unbelieving man can get nothing from Christ because of his unbelief—that is, for the very same reason that he can get nothing from his fellow-men. For the truth standeth sure: that the distrustful man gets nothing from the men he distrusts. Hence it is that the unbelieving life becomes a barren and fruitless one, and the old age of unbelief is a time of increasing hopelessness and growing death, though its victims regard such distrust as the legitimate offspring of experience which has at last ripened into wisdom.

It is from this standpoint that we can explain why youth is the period in which man makes most progress in forming friendships and in acquiring truth and character. For the heart of the young man naturally and instinctively believes. In these respects the man of faith—that is, the living man—never grows old, but is ever acquiring fresh stores of life and truth and patience and love, and all that these imply. His growing trustfulness in his fellow-men does not mean that he is more easily imposed on, or is more ready to help every impostor that seeks to victimise him. Not so; his insight into character enables him more quickly to detect cant and imposture, and this insight grows with experience. Yet even behind the cant and imposture he can recognise divine possibilities, and so at times he

is able to reach and help such hapless souls in a way higher than they sought.

Now life is given to us in the measure of our faith, and this life is to be of a positive nature—not of a negative and colourless one. To many people Christianity seems to be a mere system of inhibitions and prohibitions. This misinterpretation has led such writers as Nietzsche to conceive it as a moral system fit only for slaves. But Christianity is not a system for slaves, but for those who would be free, and free in the fullest sense—free from all the inhibitions within, without, which prevent us realising the highest possible for us; it is not a mere remedy for morbid growths, but an ideal and inspiration uplifting the desires, quickening and strengthening the will, and making us true citizens, alike of time and of eternity.

It is obvious that in the absence of a faith that aims at the realisation of the highest forms of life—that is, the spiritual—partial faiths and limited enthusiasms can rescue our life in some degree from its self-centred barrenness and contempt, and furnish it with some motive for existence and self-respect—in other words, endow us with some degree of life. Now such men as render a disinterested devotion to literature and science, to art and wisdom, offer large avenues for the entrance of truth and life on a higher plane than that of the men who give their energies solely to money-making or the winning of high place or the praise of men. The life of the scholar or the sage is larger than that of those whose vision is limited to the lower levels of life.

Again, if the heart gives itself not to such aims as these, but realises itself in a father's unselfish love, a mother's self-forgetfulness, in a chivalrous patriotism, in a disinterested service of the brethren, then it has won a still larger sense of life and opened itself to the inspiration of larger truths.

But none of these faiths open our life to the highest goodness and truth, and it is only in contrast with the entire absence of faith that we can acknowledge the work of such limited faiths. All faiths that carry us out of ourselves in devotion to some honourable object are salutary ; but being limited in their influence, they are only partial salvations : they fail of lifting the entire life. For the father that is loving and true in his home life may be hard and overreaching in his business relations ; the devoted patriot may be a treacherous personal friend ; the artist may be impure in life ; and the scholar or man of science may be the victim of gluttonous excess. Partial faiths can only work out partial salvations. For a heart *wholly* surrendered to its earthly relations is devoid of the motive and power to sacrifice these, when diviner claims call for such sacrifice. Such a faith can give no comfort to the soul distraught by its own unworthiness, no relief from its anguish, and no security from further sins of impulse and passion : it can offer no hope to the bereaved, no consolation to the mourner. Only that faith which calls for the entire surrender of our being can be the full salvation of man, only to such faith is the fulness of the divine life open. And in the measure that men surrender

themselves to Christ, in that measure He gives Himself to them ; for faith is that power which opens the lower life to the fulness of the higher, and so receives of its wisdom and grows strong with its strength. Faith in its supreme form comprehends and is the crown of all partial faiths. When it is paramount within us, it shapes our life in its greatest issues and its least ; it transfigures art, science, and philosophy, every passion of the human heart, every longing of the human spirit, every glory of human genius, and makes them one and all handmaids of the Most High.

Moreover, it is obvious that it is only this higher life that has the promise of growth, and that for ever. All lower forms of life, such as we share with the animal creation or with such intellectual forms of life as do not transcend the horizons of this world, are doomed sooner or later to extinction. Hence, if our supreme desires are centred on these, they too must die with our physical powers. But it is otherwise with the man who, however crippled by past sin and beset with infirmity, steadily follows in the footsteps of the Master. To the divine life within him, though of the faintest at the beginning, there is no limit of growth. For the essential note of the spiritual life even here is that it is not stationary or quiescent, but that it is ever growing, ever advancing, ever bringing every thought and desire and act into obedience to Christ. Such a life cannot do otherwise than abound, and abound ever more and more. Well, therefore, has the Master said : " I have come that ye may have life, and may have it abundantly."

Through such supreme faith, then, we have life and ever more abundantly. And if any one should ask how he is to inherit such life, the same answer must be given as to the young nobleman by Christ: "Keep the Commandments." The religious life is not a matter of sentiment or emotion: it is not a thing of rituals, beliefs, and creeds. The very devils, St. James says, "believe, and tremble." The religious life is the discipline and the struggle of the spirit winning its way in all the essential things of life. But if we are regarding iniquity in our heart, or deliberately doing some evil thing, or simply letting things slide, and consequently taking the line of least resistance, then we cannot receive the life Christ offers. Religion is not a keeping of this or that commandment. There is a terrible danger incurred in identifying religion with the keeping of some one commandment. The man of one virtue is generally a hopeless prig and a Pharisee. If we could discover the history of the ancient Rechabites in Israel, it would not astonish us to learn that, though they were rigid total abstainers, many of them were grievous sinners in other respects. Samson would have supported a campaign for the prohibition of alcohol; but Samson's life was not a model in matters of personal purity. On the other hand, if we look to Southern Ireland, where the emphasis was laid mainly on sexual purity, and the other virtues were ignored in comparison with it, it is not strange that lying and fanaticism, hatred and murder, have been long rampant there, and that in recent years arson and impurity have joined this fell sisterhood of crime.

But though Christianity does not mean the keeping of this or of that commandment, but embraces the whole field of duty, yet it is true that every man has his own particular weakness and besetment, where the spiritual adversary can easily get the upper hand. Now it is just here that the fight must be fought and the battle won.

But if you rejoin that you cannot do so, because the old habits, tempers, and passions are too much for you, then it is just to save you and none other that Christ came. The more profoundly you feel yourself to be lost, the more assuredly you are the very person Christ has come to save and endow with life, and that abundantly. Christ Himself declared, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." He alone has eternal life in its fulness: the one perfect exemplar of it in all the human race. If we are crushed with the sense of our sins and failures—and what man has not been at some time ?—then it is life we need at Christ's hands. However sin-stained our past may be, it matters not; Christ can redeem our present and glorify all our coming days. Did He not find His friends amongst the publicans and sinners ? Let us work out, then, our own salvation; for our sorrows and anguish of heart are the inspiration of Christ's own Spirit within us. With despair and death we have no concern. They are only for those who will to die. Let us, therefore, lay hold on eternal life in these days of our strength and vigour, and then, when the inevitable hour of our physical weakness arrives, we shall, not with sorrow

or with fear, but with joy and perfect trust—commit ourselves into our Father's keeping.

The life, then, that Christ gives is a growing one, alike in things temporal and eternal. This life endows him that receives it with a will unconquerable, an enthusiasm unextinguishable, a joy imperishable; it endows him with a greater capacity to sympathise with all things human and divine, with a new love for his neighbour which is yet intolerant of his sins, with a new enthusiasm for humanity which yet sets God above all human claims.

VIII.

EVER FULLER JOY.

"That your joy may be full."— JOHN i. 4.
"Your joy no man taketh from you."—JOHN xvi. 22.

OUR capacity for joy is an original endowment of our nature. But there are various kinds of joy or happiness. There is the joy that arises from the physical life, there is the joy that springs from the intellectual life, and there is the joy that has its source in the spiritual life.

Let us study these three kinds of joy, and discover the relation which they bear to the joy spoken of by the Evangelist.

1. First of all, there is the joy that belongs to our physical life, as our natural birthright. Now this joy is a possession that we share in common with the lower animals. Such joy is freshest and fullest in our earliest years, and gradually loses in intensity as we advance into middle age, and, if we come to threescore years and ten, or older, our physical strength becomes, but too often, in the words of the Psalmist, "labour and sorrow." It is thus manifest that this joy cannot be the joy mentioned by St. John, a joy which is such that the

world cannot give, and the world can never take away. But we must study the nature of this lower joy, since the laws that regulate it serve to throw light on joys of a higher nature.

Now physical joy consists in the pleasure that follows from the satisfaction of certain appetites and certain physical activities. Without such appetites and tendencies to physical activities there could be no such pleasure. The object of these appetites and tendencies is in the first instance not pleasure, but certain external things, and we enjoy these things, not because we seek them eagerly, but because we have within us certain impulses directed towards them. Without such impulses there could be no physical pleasure. When, therefore, a healthy man eats in obedience to the appetite of hunger, he eats because he is hungry, and not with a view to the pleasure that follows on eating. He—that is, the healthy man—eats before he enjoys, and therefore without thought of what is in store for him. Such a man may, it is true, be gradually affected by the consciousness of the pleasurable results, but the appetite can never wholly lose its objective reference.

Thus, in healthy natures, the pleasure that follows on the satisfaction of desire comes as an unsought and uncovenanted addition. But when a man eats with a view to the pleasure that follows, he becomes a mere gourmet or epicure. In so doing the gourmet has transformed and debased the character of the appetites. For, whereas the healthy man seeks the objects of the appetites not as a means but as ends in themselves,

the gourmet and the sensualist seek them purely as a means to their own pleasure, and the more eagerly they pursue such pleasure the more they weaken the primary impulses, from the satisfaction of which such pleasure arises.

And what holds true in regard to the appetites is likewise true in regard to our tendencies to physical activity. Whatever form of exercise we take, if it is to result in pleasure it must be pursued for its own sake, and not for the pleasure resulting from it. If we are to enjoy a game of cricket, or football, or tennis, or golf, if we are to enjoy a vigorous walk, or an alpine climb, we must have tendencies to activity within us, leading us out to such exertions. Whilst engaged in any game, we are not thinking, if we are healthy folk, of the pleasure that results from the game, but only of the game itself.

Likewise in the case of the affections, such as benevolence, the necessary condition, on which a man obtains the greatest pleasure, is that he does not aim at the pleasure which ensues on their satisfaction, but at the objects to which his affections are directed.

Rightly regarded, hunger is no more interested than benevolence. We are all ready to admit that genuine benevolence is disinterested, though there have, it is true, been a few isolated thinkers in the past who have maintained that benevolence itself is selfish. But such a conception is due to a gross fallacy—to a confusion of the self as the *subject*, in which the feeling or satisfaction takes place, and the self as the *object* of the

feeling, or satisfaction. Reason is an act of the self, but we do not on that account call reasoning selfish. Similarly, hunger and benevolence are states and acts of self, and in their pure and primary condition are disinterested. But both hunger and benevolence cease to be disinterested when we cultivate them because of the pleasure arising from their indulgence. The man who sees a fellow-man drowning and rushes to his rescue, irrespective of consequences, is doing an unselfish and disinterested action, but if the man does the very same action because it will give him pleasure, bring him fame, reputation, or popularity, then his action is both selfish and interested. In this case there has been a transition from natural health to sentimental disease, and the impulse, which was given in order to liberate the man and carry him out of himself, has been treacherously suborned to bring him back and make him a closer captive to self than before.

The above examples are, I think, sufficient to show that physical pleasure or joy is the guerdon—not of the man who makes it his object—but of the man who simply follows the impulse itself without regard to the resulting pleasure.

But, however wisely a man may act in regard to the physical appetites and activities, sooner or later the pleasure they render will be exhausted. And, if a man has lived for no higher ends, his life must, if he live long enough, issue even here in disappointment and despair. The physical life, which we share in common with the lower creation, is perhaps seen at its best in the birds

of the air, or the wild beasts of the field. And yet, however beautiful and attractive their life appears, it always issues in some form of tragedy, in a death either of slow starvation or of violence. And the same tragic ending, though in an intensified degree, awaits the man who lives for self-indulgence. The tragedy of such a life is infinitely worse than in the lower animals; for these have, after all, lived conformably to their nature. They have followed their natural appetites and activities and drunk to the full of the joys consequent thereon, and have not darkened them by the consciousness of disobedience to higher claims. Hence the gloom that envelops the death of the bird or of the beast is as nothing to the horror of darkness that broods over the end of the man, who has naturalised himself in the far country and voluntarily exiled himself from the Kingdom of God.

The joy, therefore, of the physical life, however right and desirable in itself, cannot, of course, be that which our Lord speaks of in our text. This joy may embrace within it the lower joy, but it must itself be of a higher nature.

2. Nor can the joy be that which springs from the intellectual life. The pleasure, which is derived from such a life, is indeed more equable and lasting than that which springs from the physical life. Even unto old age it furnishes unfailing sources of joy—that is, provided the intellectual powers last, and that knowledge is pursued for its own sake and not for the pleasure which the acquisition of knowledge yields: for the one

condition of our obtaining the highest joys of the intellectual life, as of the physical, is that we do not pursue them.

From the fact that true natural joys follow as an uncovenanted addition, we might distinguish true joy from false, in that for the true joy the price is paid before we enjoy it, but for false joy after we have enjoyed it.

This principle, that we obtain the physical and other joys of life just in the measure in which we do not make such joys our aim, is aptly defined by Bishop Boyd Carpenter, in his Bampton Lectures, as "the Law of Indirectness." John Stuart Mill in his *Autobiography* (ch. v.) gives expression to this law as follows: "Those only are happy . . . who have their minds fixed upon some other object than their own happiness; on the happiness of others, on the improvement of mankind, even on some art or pursuit, followed not as a means, but as itself an ideal end. Aiming thus at something else, they find happiness by the way."

Thus we see that in the intellectual and moral spheres the same law holds: that if we would be happy, we must not make happiness our aim.

But, however noble be the objects to which we consecrate our life, such as home, kindred, country, learning, science, art, poetry, or music,—all these, sooner or later, cease to furnish the spring of joy that God intended should arise unfailingly in the hearts of all His children. Let me quote in illustration of this fact two short poems. The first is from Shelley. This most spontaneous of our lyric poets, having lost all faith in God, gave himself

up wholly to poetry and the worship of nature, and for many years he appeared to have found in them what he sought. But at last they ceased to satisfy, and the following stanzas express the dissatisfaction that filled him :

" O world ! O life ! O time,
On whose last steps I climb,
Trembling at that where I had stood before ;
When will return the glory of your prime ?
No more—O never more !

Out of the day and night
A joy hath taken flight :
Fresh spring, and summer, and winter hoar
Move my faint heart with grief, but with delight
No more—O never more ! "

Now let us contrast this wail of despair with the glad utterance of the unknown writer, who, in face of the worst woes that life inflicts, can express his faith and hope in a veritable pæan of triumphant joy :

" In the hour of death, after this life's whim,
When the heart beats low, and the eyes grow dim,
And pain has exhausted every limb—
The lover of the Lord shall trust in Him.

When the will has forgotten the lifelong aim,
And the mind can only disgrace its fame,
And the man is uncertain of his own name—
The power of the Lord shall fill this frame.

For even the purest delight may pall,
And power must fail, and pride must fall,
And the love of the dearest friends grow small—
But the glory of the Lord is all in all."

This latter poem might be fairly taken as representing

the mental attitude of St. Paul in the closing years of his life, whose joy grew fuller as his outward lot grew darker. It is true also of every man so far as he follows in the footsteps of Christ.

These two poems present in strong contrast the issues of two lives, aiming at two different ideals.

In both cases the ideal has been pursued unselfishly; for to Shelley poetry and nature were ends in themselves, and not means: his devotion to them was disinterested and not given with a view to the pleasure to be extracted from them. But the ideals or objects of desire in the two cases are infinitely different; for while the earthly objects, to which a man devotes himself, must more and more with the advance of age fail to awake a response in the human heart, the ever-growing revelation of God's spirit in the soul of man is a spring of life and energy, unborn of circumstance, independent of condition, and transcending understanding, and with every stage in the process of physical decay achieving a fresh stage in the process of spiritual growth and joy.

3. The comparison of these two ideals has brought us to the third division of our subject—the joy that has its source in the spiritual life. Here, as in the spheres of the physical and intellectual life, the same Law of Indirectness holds: these joys are only attainable on condition that we do not make them our object.

Now it is quite clear that, if our life is to grow richer in joy, it must grow richer also in desire; for, as we

have already seen in the lower spheres of human activity, a man's capacity for joy is conditioned by the number and depth of his desires ; for joy comes on the fulfilment of desire. And so also it is in the spiritual life. In the spiritual life we have not to implant the higher desires within our hearts : these desires are either actually or potentially already there, being implanted by God Himself. It is our task to remove obstructions to their growth and to give them free play, and in so doing we become fellow-workers with God. We are simply to do the first task He calls us to in the right spirit. The reward of doing one such task is the increased power for fulfilling another of a kindred nature. And so the work of spiritual transformation advances, and more and more truly the supreme aim of such a man is fixed on the doing of God's will and not on joy or reward in any form—not even on a blessed immortality save in so far as immortality is necessary to the adequate fulfilment of God's will by His children. This crowning aspiration has been well set forth by one of the greater poets :

" Glory of warrior, glory of orator, glory of song,
Paid by a voice flying by to be lost on an endless sea—
Glory of virtue, to fight, to struggle, to right the wrong—
Nay, but she aimed not at glory, no lover of glory she :
Give her the glory of going on and still to be.

The wages of sin is death : if the ways of virtue be dust,
Would she have heart to endure for the life of the worm or the fly ?
She desires no isles of the blest, no quiet seats of the just,
To rest in a golden grove, or to bask in a summer sky :
Give her the wages of going on and not to die."

But though joy is not, and indeed cannot be, the aim of the faithful man, it must follow sooner or later. Its advent is inevitable, and the man who goes on trying to do life's daily tasks from a divine motive, enters more and more fully into a world of nobler desires and affections, and of enlarged spiritual capacities, that in the earlier stages he was incapable of, and more and more he masters his vices of greed and covetousness and impurity, of envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, till at last he is able to rejoice with them that do rejoice, admire whole-heartedly the excellence that has eclipsed his own achievement, and regard with genuine exultation the work of another that has outstripped him in the province he had come to regard as specially his own.

Thus more and more he does what is right from the sheer love of right, and, so far as he does so, joy follows of a divine necessity. In this way the lost physical joys of youth are replaced not by similar emotions born of outward circumstance and fleeting in duration, but by joys unborn of circumstance and growing in depth and fulness in the course of the eternal years.

Wherever true joy, physical or spiritual, exists, there youth exists. These two joys may subsist together, but our tenure of the physical joy is necessarily brief in duration, whereas, if we are trying to be faithful, our acquisition of spiritual joy is growing steadily in depth and fulness, as we advance in the spiritual life. The spiritual life can never age : it is always fresh and glowing as the dawn. After every failure the man of

faith makes a new beginning—and that a beginning based on a more chastened spirit, on a deeper humility and sturdier resolve, and endowed with the promise and potency of greater powers and ampler fulfilments.

And so it is that as we grow older in years we are growing younger in spirit, and entering more and more into the true life of God's children, which is an ever fresh and eternal youth. It is from this standpoint that we might explain the old saying: "Those whom the gods love die young"—the true reason being that God's children can never grow old. And thus it comes that, in the case of such, physical death is in the most true sense the gate to that larger life in which our recovered youth discloses a still loftier spirit of adventure, more soaring expectations, more unfathomable trusts, quicker wonder and enthusiasms, in which aspiration is ever culminating in achievement, activity ever issuing in joy, hope ever springing up inextinguishably, and love is becoming, in ever larger measure, lord for evermore.

IX.

PHARISAISM—I.

"Unless your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven."—MATT. v. 20.

"And the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and tempting him asked him to shew them a sign from heaven. But he answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the heaven is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day: for the heaven is red and lowring. Ye know how to discern the face of the heaven; but ye cannot discern the signs of the times."—MATT. xvi. 1–3.[1]

MY subject this afternoon is hypocrisy, and that as it appears in the New Testament amongst the Pharisees. But my object is not to treat this

[1] Luke xii. 54 represents the words as being spoken to the multitudes just as he does in iii. 7 (contrast Matt. iii. 7); vi. 39 (contrast Matt. xv. 12–14); xi. 14, 15 (contrast Matt. xii. 24); but Mark iii. 22 speaks here not of Pharisees but scribes; xi. 29 (contrast Matt. xii. 38). But, as we know, this Evangelist eliminates most of the details of the anti-Pharisaic controversy so prominent in Mark and Matthew (see *Oxford Studies in the Synoptic Problem*, 70, 71, 134). Thus, though Mark viii. 11, and Matt. xii. 38, xvi. 1, agree in representing the Pharisees as asking a sign, Luke in the parallel passage xi. 16 weakens this into "others." Luke omits entire paragraphs reproducing this anti-Pharisaic controversy, as those on "unwashen hands" and divorce, and passages against Pharisaic legalism in the Sermon on the Mount.

We should observe Matt. xvi. 2*b*, 3 is omitted by some of the best MSS. and Versions. The substance of it, however, is found in Luke xii 54–56

subject purely historically, as a type of religious life peculiar to Palestine, and to describe it as a sort of exotic in our own or other ages, but to study it as a living subject, a vice and sin which, though it flourished in a supereminent degree in Palestine in the first century of our era, is nevertheless common to all religions and all Churches.

A witty Frenchman has defined hypocrisy as the homage that vice pays to virtue. There would be no advantage gained in rendering such homage, unless virtue were a real thing and commanded respect. By affecting such virtue hypocrisy seeks to gain the advantages that flow from it. Hypocrisy is thus a testimony to the truth and excellence of virtue—and that a testimony extorted from its enemies.

The hypocrisy, therefore, of the Pharisees is incontrovertible evidence that in their own time and earlier a form of true religion flourished, which counted amongst its adherents the soundest elements of the nation. Now, if we would understand the peculiar character of the hypocrisy of that time, we should know something of the Pharisaism on which it modelled itself outwardly, and which owing to its peculiar character lent itself so easily to imitation from without, and to the identification of Pharisaism and hypocrisy ever since as synonymous terms.

The name "Pharisee" was unknown till the close of the second century B.C. The Pharisees were not a sect but a party in the Jewish Church, a legitimate development of orthodox Judaism, distinguished from the mass of

their fellow-countrymen rather by the strictness of their observances than by their deviations from traditional Judaism. The word "Pharisee" denotes one who separates himself from persons or things that are impure. It is uncertain whether the Pharisees first called themselves by this designation, or whether it was first given to them by their enemies, and afterwards came into common use in the same way as Methodist was first used as a term of reproach of the followers of John Wesley and afterwards adopted by the Wesleyans themselves. Their distinctive name for each other was *chaber*—that is, "comrade" or "brother."

But though themselves separated from the mass of the people owing to its impurity, they did not separate themselves from the Jewish community at large in matters of doctrine and worship. They worshipped along with the Jews in temple and synagogue, and were in every respect the classical representatives of the Judaism of that period. Hillel had given commandment, "Separate not thyself from the congregation" (Aboth. ii. 5).

But though the name did not originate till nearly the close of the second century B.C., the movement it denotes was flourishing in its opening years. The Pharisees are to be traced back to the Chasidim, who were already a definite party in the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, the Syrian king who attempted to destroy Judaism and substitute in its stead the worship of the gods of Greece. Now it was the Chasidim, the founders of what was later called the Pharisaic party, that gave

up their lives in thousands in defence of their religion, and ultimately under the great Maccabean leaders secured alike the faith and the liberty of their country. These Chasidim were rigid upholders of the law. We are told that on one occasion, when the armies of Antiochus came upon them when engaged in worship on the Sabbath day, they offered no resistance, since it was the Sabbath day, but fell as they stood by the swords of the Syrians. It is true that after this event Judas the Maccabee persuaded them to defend themselves henceforth on the Sabbath day, but they refused to act aggressively on that day. They were thus as rigid upholders of the Mosaic law as their spiritual descendants, the Pharisees of later times. For half a century after the defeat of Antiochus the Chasidim are unknown to history. When they reappear they had come to bear the new name "Pharisees," and from henceforth for good or ill they moulded the destinies of the nation. However corrupt their party became in later times, it was incomparably noble in its early days. It incorporated within it the purest enthusiasm and religious faith of the nation, and though spiritual children of the scribes they drew within their membership the most zealous of the priestly as well as of the non-priestly families. When they first took action in the history of the nation, they did so as the champions of the law over against the Hellenising Sadducees, but they were still more the representatives of advanced forms of doctrine on the Messianic kingdom, the resurrection of the dead, and the future life. To this comparatively small body

of men were entrusted for some decades the defence, confirmation, and development of the religious truths that were to save the world. How nobly and with what prodigal self-sacrifice they proved themselves worthy guardians of this sacred trust is told for all time in the Enoch and Maccabean literature, and set forth in pregnant strength and simplicity in the New Testament book of the Hebrews (xi. 35–39), which describes them as those " of whom the world was not worthy."

Now it is from these heroic generations that the Pharisees derived their origin. But if the above description of the Chasidim were to be taken as in even the briefest language adequate it would be wholly misleading. The Chasidim, or the Pharisees, as I shall henceforth call them, were, it is true, most zealous students and champions of the law. But they were something more. They were not merely legalists, even in the best sense of the word. For to legalism, or that phase of religion which follows the letter of the law, it is unreasonable to look for growth in spiritual and intellectual knowledge. There is needed a prophetic side. And this prophetic side did exist in early Pharisaism, and gave birth to the Book of Daniel, certain chapters in Isaiah, and subsequent kindred literature, which in Judaism was always issued pseudonymously—that is, under the name of some ancient worthy earlier than the time of Ezra. The reason for this pseudonymity was the fact that from Ezra's time onwards the law was claimed to be all-sufficient for time and eternity, alike as an intellectual creed, a liturgical system, and a

practical guide in ethics and religion. Thus theoretically there was no room left for new light and inspiration, or any fresh disclosure of God's will; in short, no room for the true prophet—only for the moralist, the casuist, or the preacher. Hence if any man, like the author of Daniel, felt himself to be charged with a real message of God to his day and generation as to the future lot of the people or of the individual, the Messiah and His kingdom, he was compelled to resort to pseudonymity, that is, to issue his book under the name of some ancient worthy. And if these grounds had been insufficient in themselves for the adoption of pseudonymity, there was the further ground—the formation of a Canon. When once the prophetic Canon was closed, no book of a prophetic character could gain a place among the sacred writings at all, unless its date was believed to be as early as the time of Ezra. The late origin of the Book of Daniel becomes obvious to every one through the fact that in the Hebrew Bible it is excluded from the books of the Prophets and reckoned amongst quite another class of writings.

There is yet another characteristic of the early Pharisees that even the briefest account of them should not ignore. These early Pharisees not only zealously studied the law, and, whether they would or no, developed its teaching on prophetic and apocalyptic lines, but they were also the chief and unrivalled representatives of learning in Judaism. In this respect they created an aristocracy of learning over against the aristocracy of rank possessed by the Sadducees. No

honour, the Pharisees contended, was too high for the true student of the law. Even if such a man were by birth legitimate, he was higher in rank than an ignorant High Priest (Talmud, *Hor.* 13*a*). At the close of the first century B.C. Hillel declares that "No unlearned man fears incurring the guilt of sin, and that no one of the common herd is pious" (Aboth. ii. 6). We are familiar with the like Pharisaic utterance in John vii. 49: "This people which know not the law are cursed."

Never perhaps in the history of mankind has learning been so glorified as by the Pharisees. And yet, if the glorification of learning leads to such pride of intellect, and scorn and excommunication of the ignorant, as it did amongst the Pharisees, men of ordinary common sense would naturally question its utility, and ask if it were not more of an evil than a good.

Now this is an important matter, since it affects the character not only of ancient Pharisaism, but also of such modern Churches as set so great a value on intellectual formulas and creeds, that they are commonly and genuinely regarded as of greater spiritual worth than a godly life itself.

But it is not learning in itself that is answerable for the evil results that have followed on its use in ancient and later times, but on the absolute misuse that the Pharisees and like offenders in all Churches ever since have made of learning. There is the right use of learning and the wrong use. It is used rightly when it is used as a means of discovering truth. With regard to things spiritual, St. Paul writes: "Put all things

to the test and hold fast that which is good." It is used wrongly when it is used merely to bolster up dogmas accepted in the past on inadequate grounds and conflicting with the fuller truths arrived at in later times. Since the object of learning is truth, to dictate the conclusions at which the mind must arrive is to preclude the possibility of its ever arriving at truth. Hence learning must not be bound under any yoke of servitude: it must be absolutely free. Only then can it be the true handmaid of the spiritual freedom wherewith Christ has made us free. But, when learning is in bondage, its sole task is to confirm and stereotype the formulas and creeds of earlier ages, as though they were God's full and final revelation to mankind. It is remarkable, moreover, that the more enslaved such erudition becomes, the more arrogant and infallible grow its claims as it labours at its hopeless task of making God in the image of man instead of helping man to grow into the image of God.

The labours of the scribes and Pharisees in their elucidation and development of the law resulted in what is known in the New Testament as the "traditions of the elders." These were said to be as binding as the Mosaic law (Aboth. iii. 17). In the Christian Churches of the present day the traditions and decrees of the elders have not only claimed and in many Churches been accorded the same validity as the New Testament itself, but even greater, for in many respects they run counter to its teaching. This is specially true of the Roman Church and of extreme parties in all other

Churches. The vast labours of Pharisaic scholars are embodied in the Talmud. This gigantic work serves at once as a memorial to their endless industry and a warning against the traditions they accepted and the methods they pursued. The keen minds of the Rabbis who produced it were working in fetters. Hence we must not be astonished at the frequent futility of their labours. Here and there, it is true, are to be found sayings and passages of priceless worth, but they cannot redeem the overwhelming mass of the trivialities in which they are embedded. These nimble-witted and learned scholars were the victims of a wrong system just as in later times were the Schoolmen, who, because the object of their search was not truth in and for itself, but the buttressing of authoritative dogmas, were sometimes guilty of as great trivialities as the Jewish Rabbis. There is not much to choose between the futility of many discussions in the Talmud and of some in the Schoolmen. While the Talmud devoted a great part of a treatise to discussing the question: Was it right to eat an egg which had been laid on the Sabbath Day? the Schoolmen were at variance as to how many angels could dance on the point of a needle.

It was not, of course, by their failures and trivialities that the Pharisees won their unrivalled position of authority in Judaism. In its beginnings it was an intensely lofty and spiritual movement, and by their faithfulness to the noblest of its teachings they came in due time to mould the character and destinies of Judaism. But with success, as is always the case

in religious movements, came corruption. The Pharisees as early as the second century B.C. had become the popular saints of Judaism. As such they wielded a tremendous power not only in Jerusalem but in every synagogue throughout Palestine, and the temptation to assume the outward form and profession of these religious leaders was more than the ambitious and self-seeking youths of that age could withstand. Besides, such imitation, as I have already pointed out, was particularly easy. Though in the true Pharisee the right motive was set above everything, yet since the outer life of the Pharisee was so taken up with ritual and ceremonial observances, as well as with casuistical indulgences and evasions where the prescripts of the law were too severe, it was a matter of the greatest difficulty to distinguish between the true Pharisee and the Pharisee who was a hypocrite. In fact, the false Pharisee is censured as early as the second century before Christ. Thus a Jewish writer towards the close of that century condemns the double-faced character of those who fast in public but are guilty of impurity in private; he visits with the same censure those who give largely to the poor yet in business transactions are fraudulent and merciless (Test. Ash. ii.–vi.). Early in the next century their critic is Alexander Jannæus, a Jewish King. He was not, it is true, an estimable character. Moreover, he had fought the Pharisees all his life. But on his death-bed he advised his wife to make terms with the Pharisees, telling her not to fear the true Pharisees, but the hypocrites who alleged that

they were Pharisees (Sotah 22*b*). At a later date the Pharisees were divided into seven classes (Sotah 22*b*, Jer. Talmud, *Ber.* ix. 14*b*), five of which were obviously either eccentrics or hypocrites; while early in the second century of the Christian era we meet with such expressions as "Pharisaic destroyers of the world" (Sotah iii. 4) and "Pharisaic plagues" (Jer. Talmud, *Sotah* iii. 19*a*). These censures of the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, emanating from the Jews themselves, enable us to understand our Lord's terrible denunciation of the Pharisees in the New Testament. Yet even in New Testament times we are not to suppose that there was not a minority of good Pharisees in the background, who obeyed the law from the heart and found the approval of God in such obedience. There was such a minority, but the prevailing impression made by the Pharisees as a class on that age was distinctly hurtful.

This is the view implied in our Lord's words, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." Now these words are directed against a whole class, and yet apart from the manifest hypocrites in this class its members were regarded by the Jewish people as true men of God and true saints of Judaism. And this cannot surprise us when we consider the following facts. They were free from sensual vice: thus the Pharisee, in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, thanked God that he was not an adulterer. They were not mere formalists or ritualists, for they were full of enthusiasm

for the Mosaic law and the worship of the one true God. And in furtherance of their religious views they worked in season and out of season, in temple court and village synagogue, at the street corners and the market-places. And when the need arose even for the sacrifice of their lives, they flung them away unsparingly in conflict with the legionaries of Imperial Rome.

That, therefore, they won the unbounded admiration of their countrymen as true saints of Judaism is intelligible. And that they had won such admiration our Lord declares three times in the Sermon on the Mount in the words, "Verily, I say unto you they have their reward," or rather, "they have their reward to the full." But these words, which appear to commend their success, carry with them a terrible implication, and mean just this: Ye have won the approval of your people in the fullest measure, but ye have nothing to expect beyond this. The Pharisees were taken at their own valuation by men, but that valuation was not one recognised by God.

Now how are we to distinguish this Pharisaism from other evil phenomena in human life? Just in this way. When an evil class attains its ends, not by evil acts, but by good acts, or what appear to be good acts, then that class is Pharisaic. But even amongst the Pharisees of this vitiated class there were two divisions. There were Pharisees who were quite conscious of their own evil motives and Pharisees who were not conscious. The former practised no deception on themselves, though they did on their neighbours. These were certainly

gross sinners, but it does not appear that our Lord's denunciations were directed against these conscious hypocrites, for the words in Matt. xxiii. 14, which charge the Pharisees with devouring widows' houses and for a pretence making long prayers, are an interpolation and are relegated to the margin in the Revised Version. In Mark xii. 40 and Luke xx. 47, they are directed, not against the Pharisees, but against the scribes.

But the second division was composed of men of a more vicious type, because unconscious of their viciousness. Now it is with these that we are mainly concerned. The Pharisees of this second division were unconscious of their viciousness, and being unconscious of it they were not susceptible of repentance and conversion. They were outwardly good, but their goodness was a false goodness, and yet of this fact they were ignorant. Whereas the members of the first division knew that they were mere hypocrites, the members of this second division did not know that they were hypocrites. Hence to these seeming saints and outwardly respectable members of Jewish society our Lord declares: "Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." This Pharisaism was an evil of the worst type, and for this reason. Though it was evil it did not know that it was evil, and it was, therefore, by its very nature incapable of repentance. Hence, while gross sinners, such as the publicans and harlots, still possessed some elements of what St. Luke calls the honest and good heart, and so could recognise their guilt when it was

brought home to them, could repent of their sin, and enter into the kingdom of heaven, these Pharisees, deceiving others and self-deceived, were through their self-wrought corruption deaf to the spiritual witness of God within them and blind to the outward spiritual witness that came to them in the law and in the prophets.

X.

PHARISAISM—II.

"Unless your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven."—MATT. v. 20.

AT the close of the last sermon we arrived at the conclusion that our Lord's denunciations of the Pharisees were directed, not against the conscious hypocrites of this party, but against those who were unconscious that they were hypocrites. The former there was no need of denouncing. They were fully aware of their own corruption: they knew that they were using certain forms of popular piety in order to deceive others, and by such deception to attain their own selfish ends. But the self-deceived or unconscious Pharisees belonged to quite a different category. They not only deceived others, they had actually succeeded in deceiving themselves; nay, more, they believed that they had succeeded in deceiving God, and that God had taken them at their own valuation. In the classical passage on this subject—the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican—the Pharisee is quite sincere in thanking God that he is such an excellent man and

that he is free from the sins of the rest of mankind. The power of sin to which the Scriptures rightly ascribe the quality of deceiving those who are guilty of it could go no further; in the case of the Pharisees it had achieved its crowning success. It had made its victims believe that they were truly righteous and acceptable in God's sight, when in reality they were wholly gone in unrighteousness and furthest from God alike in spirit and in truth.

It is significant that in His denunciation of the Pharisees our Lord dwells on this self-delusion of the Pharisees and the dangers it entailed on those that followed them. Thus, while in some passages He charges them with being blind with regard to their own spiritual state in such phrases as "ye blind" (xxiii. 19, 26),[1] "ye fools and blind" (xxiii. 17), in others He denounces them as "blind guides" (xxiii. 16, 24), and foreshadows the danger the Jewish nation is incurring in following such guidance in the significant words, "If the blind lead the blind, they shall both fall into the ditch" (Matt. xv. 14, 15).

Now since this study of Pharisaism is not a mere pathological study of a dead and bygone spiritual distemper that was once indigenous to Palestine and has never reappeared since, but is an ethical study of a malignant disease common to all religions in all lands

[1] Of several of the denunciations of the Pharisees in Matthew, the parallel passages in Luke omit the term "Pharisees" and use "lawyers" (xi. 46, 52) or "scribes" (xx. 46), but retain "Pharisees" in xi. 39, 43.

and all ages, it is a matter of vital importance to discover how it is that men can thus come to be Pharisees in the worst sense of the word; that is, how, though their natures are bad, they can bring themselves and others to believe in their goodness and persuade themselves also that God likewise believes in that goodness. But before we do so we should recall other vices of which they stand impeached in the Synoptic Gospels. These might be summarised as follows. They were "lovers of money" (Luke xvi. 14), fair in outward seeming but inwardly "full of extortion and excess" (Matt. xxiii. 25); they honoured God with their lips, while their hearts were far from Him (Matt. xv. 8); they sounded a trumpet, that is, invited the public to observe, when they gave alms in the synagogues and in the public places (Matt. vi. 2); they prayed at the corners of the streets; when they fasted they made others aware of their discipline of the flesh by wearing long faces and being of a sad countenance (Matt. vi. 16, xxiii. 5).

Now the main motive for all these practices was their desire to be seen of men and to win their praise. But the indictment does not end here. They are condemned implicitly for their whole method of interpreting the Scriptures, seeing that their interpretation led to traditions that made the Word of God of none effect (Matt. xv. 3, 6). But the arraignment assumed still darker colours, when our Lord denounced them in such appalling terms as "ye serpents," "ye brood of vipers" (Matt. xxiii. 33, xii. 34), "ye sons of hell" (Matt. xxiii. 15).

This is a most grave indictment [1] of the chief religious class of Judaism in the first century of the Christian era, and that it was a just one of the main body of the Pharisees history has proved by its record of the utter overthrow of Judaism under their leadership a generation later.

Now, how are we to explain this grievous declension of the Pharisees in the time of our Lord from the singular nobleness alike in motive and life that marked the Pharisees of earlier generations? As I have pointed out in my former sermon on this subject, Pharisaism had grown corrupt through success. When to be a Pharisee brought with it contempt, persecution, or death, only men of a high spiritual type joined this movement. But when the Pharisees became the popular saints of Judaism and determined its destinies, men of an ambitious and self-seeking character pressed into its ranks in order to reap the rich rewards that attended on its profession. At last Pharisaism had become the orthodox faith of the nation, and since to

[1] In the *Jewish Encyclopædia* (vol. ix. 665) Kohler declares that "in regard to the main doctrines He (*i.e.* Jesus) agreed with them. . . . Owing, however, to the hostile attitude taken towards the Pharisaic schools by Pauline Christianity, especially in the reign of the Emperor Hadrian, 'Pharisees' was inserted in the Gospels wherever High Priests and Sadducees or Herodians were originally mentioned as persecutors of Jesus." This is a very unfortunate misstatement of fact. Of the four Gospels Luke is the Pauline one. Now in this Gospel the anti-Pharisaic statements and discourses are for the most part omitted, and frequently denunciations which are represented in Mark and Matthew, as spoken against the Pharisees, appear in Luke as addressed to the people generally.—*Oxford Studies in the Synoptic Problem*, 70, 71. See note on the previous sermon, p. 102.

orthodoxy there is the promise of the good things both of this world and of the world to come, it need cause no surprise that men who looked to the main chance, and such are often in the majority, adopted the popular creed of the day.

And yet, notwithstanding the general bad impression that Pharisaism with its corrupt motives, its legalism, and ritualism makes upon the reader, it does not of course follow that all the Pharisees were corrupt. A religious movement does not succeed by its vices but by its virtues. There must always have been a faithful minority who, despite the multitudinous and exacting claims of the law, served God in all humility and singleness of heart. With this minority, however, we are not here concerned. We have at present to do, not with these, but with the great majority who drew upon themselves the unforgettable denunciations of our Lord. Now it has been usual to condemn the members of this large religious class as corrupt from the beginning of their religious profession to its close. Such a condemnation is, we are assured, wrong. One fact stands in the way of its acceptance. The Pharisees were convinced of their own goodness. If it is rejoined that they were self-deceived in so believing, we may grant this fully, but the difficulty still remains unexplained. How did the Pharisees come to believe in themselves, unless at some crisis in their lives they had been individually honest with themselves? Now, it is just in respect of these enemies and persecutors of our Lord that this claim must be made, and made because of the

moral victories which the Pharisees had won over the temptations of the flesh. For most of the Pharisees appear to have been free from the grosser sins of the flesh. But if a man is free from such sins as impurity, intemperance, and gluttony, it means that at some time in his life he won at no small cost a moral victory over appetites which are difficult to curb and bring to heel. We may grant that some men may master these appetites through prudence and through fear of the penalties that attend on their wrong indulgence. But with the bulk of normally developed men it takes something more than prudence to reduce to their rightful obedience these strong and rebellious appetites. Indeed, most men find that nothing short of the immediate help of God's Spirit can save them. Now, what does this mean? It means just this, that the bulk of the self-deceived Pharisees condemned by Christ were at some period of their lives sincere and honest men, and it was with a consciousness of the sincerity and righteousness of their motives that they had entered on their religious profession.

Starting from this time, when they could rightly believe in themselves, we can now understand how, though their sincerity did not extend to the whole province of their religious experience, this early belief in themselves persisted. During the years in which they were actively obedient to God's Spirit they acquired certain habits that were blameless and unexceptionable, and thus became assured that they were true servants of God. And this their personal assurance was con-

firmed from without; their contemporaries willingly bestowed on them their benediction, and both the Jewish Church and the Jewish world acquiesced in making goodness and religion consist in the possession of such good principles and habits as the Pharisees were accredited with. But habits, however unexceptionable, are not religion; they are not faith, nor hope, nor love, but are the product of these graces. All these graces require the religious life to be progressive, to be ever advancing, ever working from purer motives and acting with increase of power and sacrifice. But habits are essentially stationary. They do not carry men forward: they have no impelling, no inspiring power. In fact, the older such habits become the more mechanical and less spiritual they tend to be. When these spiritual graces cease to grow and act, there ensues an arrest of spiritual development, and religion becomes synonymous with a routine of religious and social duties, whether self-devised or imposed from without by a religious community. Now, just because they have become a routine, this phase of Pharisaism fails to touch the deeper faults of character, the covetousness and greed, the meanness, jealousies, hatreds, and ambitions, and all the vices of the spirit, which under such excellent cover have gone on growing all the time; and, because the victims of such Pharisaism have done certain good works, used certain theological phrases, observed certain ritual observances, they have gone on thinking themselves good and been accepted as such by their neighbours; nay, more,

have believed themselves to be regarded as such by God.

But this is not all. They often succeed in inhibiting the outward expression of many of the sins of the spirit, such as covetousness and vanity, envy, malice and hatred, not from any deep spiritual motive but to comply with the religious requirements of their day.

Regarded outwardly, good deeds and good habits, when they have become purely mechanical, may appear to have a spiritual worth, but they have, of course, no claim to this distinction, and accordingly no part in the religious life. And yet such achievements naturally impose on the world, and this deception of others necessarily reacts on its authors and confirms them in their self-delusion. Actions which are outwardly good and which should be the expression of inwardly good motives are taken at their face value, and those who perform them are more and more accepted to be that which they are not. The Pharisee is thus at once the author and the victim of the deception under which he labours.

At this stage Pharisaism has become, not the temple of true religion, but, in the words of our Lord's piercing criticism, its sepulchre or grave.

When Pharisaism has reached this stage there is no limit to its progress in self-deception. It will practise the popular virtues of its own time not for their own sake but as a convenience to secure its own ends. While the good man practises the virtues for their own sake and thereby invests his conduct with a spiritual and

unearthly splendour, the Pharisee suborns them to his own personal ends and transforms them into vices. And yet he often escapes detection, for each age supposes its own virtues to be so super-excellent in character that they cannot but authenticate the goodness of the motives from which they spring. But the excellence of the outward action is no credential to the motive behind it. Though it takes true saints to initiate new moral and spiritual developments, when once these are recognised, and involve no spiritual cost or loss of popular favour, vicious men can adopt them and use them for their own purposes. In fact, Pharisaism shuns vice, and even the appearance of vice, as its instrument. So long as it can conscript the popular virtues, it can command the situation and attain its end.

The outward conduct of the Pharisees varies from age to age, but the aim is ever one and the same. They affected certain observances and beliefs in the days of our Lord; they affect quite different observances and beliefs to-day, and they will affect quite a different set to-morrow. Accordingly, when the close observance of oppressive rites and ordinances, the accurate fulfilment of forms and punctilious adherence to the very letter, are the marks of true religion in one age, these will characterise the Pharisees of that age. On the other hand, if at another age contempt for order and tradition, a craving for excitement and a proneness to extravagance be marks of godly zeal, then the Pharisee will at once adopt these as his own.

Precisianism and routine are no necessary elements

in his policy. The Pharisee can dispense with the old virtues on the same terms as he accepts the new, and these terms are that they should further his own individual interest or that of his party. Pharisaism is therefore not limited to religion. The most successful and perhaps the worst Pharisaism often finds its best scope in politics, and no politicians are so much exposed to Pharisaism as the popular leaders of the present day.

But we cannot enter on this and other fields where Pharisaism flourishes with the greatest vigour.

The true Pharisee, though he neither is what he seems nor seems what he is, is therefore not a person who deceives others and knows all the time that he is deceiving them, but is one that is deceiving both himself and others; he is one that is seeking the praise of men, and yet fails to recognise that it is the praise of men and not the praise of God that he is seeking.

This self-delusion our Lord ascribes to their failure to use the same intelligence and judgment in their religious concerns as they used daily in their secular affairs. This argument He drives home in the words, "When it is evening ye say, It will be fine weather: for the heaven is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day: for the heaven is red and lowring. Ye know how to discern the face of the heaven, but ye cannot discern the signs of the times." When men will not be guided in religious matters by such evidence as they act on in daily life, they are either the slaves of tradition or the victims of prejudice. In the words I have cited, our Lord requires men to judge themselves

as to their motives and conduct; to use the same intelligence in their religious beliefs as they do in their secular business. St. Paul puts this duty in still more insistent terms: "Put all things to the test," writes the apostle, and, when they have passed such scrutiny, he bids them to "hold fast that which is good." When the right of such judgment is denied to the members of a Church, it is no wonder that they become the helpless slaves of ignorance, deceit, and superstition. And the deeper their ignorance and superstition the greater their arrogance becomes, their self-complacency, and their contempt for such as refuse to bow to the same obscurantist yoke. The slaves of religious tradition and religious infallibilities are capable of any enormity. In their blind obedience they are ready for any crime. Thus our Lord tells His disciples that these bond-slaves of Jewish tradition will put them out of the synagogues—that is, will excommunicate them, just as the Roman Church to-day excommunicates those who refuse to accept its fond inventions and most recent infallibilities; and He adds, "Whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God's service." Thus murder, He tells them, will follow on their bigotry and fanaticism. And history has amply confirmed this prophecy, not only in the case of the Roman Church, but in a minor degree in the case of the Reformed Churches, for nearly a century after the Reformation. The Reformed Churches, however, have long ceased to murder men for their religious opinions. But in theory the Roman Church has not followed this good

example. According to Roman Canon Law, it is still the duty of that Church to deal in this fashion with those who disagree with it. How vigorously it pursued this policy of old we know only too well. This Roman doctrine, that the holding of correct beliefs or of what are deemed correct beliefs is essential to salvation, has perverted numberless noble minds. In this ancient Abbey there is a noble monument reared in memory of one of England's greatest soldiers—Henry v. Yet this king, when Prince of Wales, sanctioned with his presence the murder of his subjects for "heresy." John Badby, of Evesham, was convicted of denying the literal truth of transubstantiation, though he accepted its spiritual implication. In the Prince's presence he was committed to the flames. When he was half burned, the Prince pulled him out of the fire and, "when he had recovered consciousness, offered him pardon and a pension if he would recant. Badby refused, and the Prince put him back in the fire."[1] How destructive of all true life is a corrupt form of religion. Pius v., the only Pope who had been canonised for centuries, commissioned a cut-throat to assassinate Queen Elizabeth, and "declared that he was willing to spare a culprit guilty of a hundred murders rather than a single notorious heretic."[2] It was this same Pope that established the *Index*, and pursued with relentless hatred the scholars who favoured unfettered research.

The massacre of St. Bartholomew in France in 1572

[1] Gwatkin, *Church and State in England*, p. 119, 1917.
[2] Lord Acton's *Correspondence*, i. 127, 130.

of some 22,000 to 70,000 souls was approved by Pope Gregory XIII. and a medal struck in its honour, three copies of which are preserved in the British Museum.[1] A high service of thanksgiving also was held in the Vatican. A copy of the Office compiled for this service is still preserved in the Bodleian Library in Oxford. The massacre of the Protestants in Ulster, in 1641, cannot be set reasonably below 6000 to 8000 men, women, and children. These are ample proofs of the enormities to which a narrow and obscurantist creed can lead its unfortunate devotees. Such a creed may enlist scholars in its defence and propagation, but it treats them as serfs, for it prescribes the results at which their researches must arrive. On controversial questions the truth-seeker generally shuns the productions of such helots in the province of learning, for when scholars are working in fetters their conclusions cannot be taken seriously. If research is to arrive at truth, it must be free. But such freedom is constantly withheld. The Pharisees withheld it in ancient times and prescribed the Mosaic law as adequate and final. In modern times the Roman Church prescribes its infallible dogmas as ultimate and necessary to salvation, while in a somewhat lesser degree the Romanising Party in our own Church, and the ultra-Evangelicals in all Churches, issue their indispensable terms of fellowship; nay, more, the most benighted members of these two

[1] Though modern Roman apologists challenge the genuineness of these, Bonanni, a Jesuit, in his *Numismata Pontiff Rom.*, 1699, has no doubts.

opposing parties declare that these terms are essential to salvation itself. The Pharisees are strongly entrenched in all the Christian Churches of the present day. The ultramontane members of these Churches should beware lest to them should be applicable Christ's words of execration : " Ye serpents, ye brood of vipers, ye sons of hell."

But the dangers of Pharisaism are not to be considered as only affecting communities and Churches. They affect us all individually. What lessons are we to learn from this study of Pharisaism ? The three main lessons are : First, we must see to it that we are not double-minded. Our conduct must not suggest high spiritual motives while in our hearts we cherish another class of motives conflicting directly with them. We must be single-minded. This is the first requisite, but it is not in itself sufficient to guard against Pharisaism. The typical Pharisee of Christ's time believed in his own honesty, even when he was not honest. He was not conscious of a conflict between his motives and outward conduct. Similarly Pius v., to whom I have already referred, was thoroughly confident that he was the true representative of Christ when he was most unchristian, and committed to the flames or to the sword all who questioned the creed he dictated. Thus single-mindedness or the belief in our single-mindedness is not sufficient to protect us from the sin of Pharisaism. We need two other graces, and the first of these is humility. And by humility we mean not only a readiness to accept reproof when we are wrong and to amend

our ways, but also an openness of mind to all truth from whatever quarter it comes. Humility thus means a never-failing openness to spiritual, moral, and intellectual truth, attended with the obedience that such disclosures require; for disobedience closes the avenues by which such truth comes to us. Thus single-heartedness and humility are the first two indispensable prerequisites, if we would escape the sin of Pharisaism. But there is yet a third. For the Christian Pharisee could practise the rules prescribed by Christianity and remain a Pharisee at heart. He could, were it necessary, practise the utmost austerity or the most lavish almsgiving; he could even turn the other cheek and bless them that cursed him, and pray for those who used him despitefully and persecuted him. Only one thing would be beyond him, and that is to forgive from the heart and love his enemy. Christ summed up all duty in the grace of love, and St. Paul declared, "Love is the fulfilling of the law." Hence, firstly, single-heartedness or sincerity; secondly, humility, which implies the possession of the honest and good heart—open to all goodness and to all truth; and thirdly, love: these three are the graces Christ requires in us, if we would be His true followers and not the victims of Pharisaic self-delusion.

And whilst with Christ's help we honestly strive to practise these graces, we should beware of trying to appear better than we are, or of pretending to some grace or excellence or knowledge in which we are lacking. We are not even to affect to be as good as we think we

are, and to publish to all and sundry the excellences that are genuinely ours. We must fashion our conduct neither to obtain the good opinion of the world we live in nor to escape its censure, but for a higher and diviner end. If we are really trying to be good men, we need not trouble about the opinion of others, nor about the influence we are wielding; so far as we are really followers of Christ, we cannot fail to influence others for good, for whatever of God's light there is in us will shine before men, and shine before them in such a fashion that they will glorify not us but our Father in heaven.

XI.

AUTHORITY IN RELIGION.

"He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."—MARK i. 22.

IF we would learn the character of Christ's teaching as described by the Evangelist, we must first know what was the character of the teaching of the scribes, from which it is so definitely distinguished. To begin with, we observe that it is the multitudes that draw this distinction, which Mark records as existing between the teaching of Christ and that of the scribes. "He taught as one having authority," as a prophet, who came with His credentials direct from God: the scribes taught second-hand truths; they had not the direct witness in themselves, and accordingly they had to fall back on the authoritative statements of their predecessors or of the Law.

It must, however, be confessed that the scribes were in a most difficult position. They were hampered on every side by the belief that the Law of Moses was valid for all eternity: that it was adequate to explain all moral difficulties and meet all fresh emergencies, if rightly expounded, and that it was infallible not only

in the spirit but in the letter also. They believed further that the Prophets, Psalms, and other books of the Old Testament would in the future cease to be, but the Law would endure for ever.

With such a mechanical and hopeless doctrine of inspiration, what opening was there for a man who felt he had a prophetic message to deliver? There was none; for there was absolutely no room for the prophet in Judaism. From the time of Ezra onwards, the prophet who came forward in his own name could not gain a hearing, unless his prophecy was simply a reinforcement of the Law. One way, indeed, there was by which an inspired man could evade these mechanical restrictions, and this was by issuing his prophecy anonymously, or under the name of some ancient worthy who lived before the time of Ezra. Of such a nature is the Book of Daniel and others of the same school. It was by these pseudonymous writers that the revelation of God was carried forward in the provinces of religion and ethics, and the doctrine of a future life.

But the scribes did not belong to this school. They were simply the students and expounders of an inspired Law. Through their studies of the Law there grew up a large body of traditional expositions which in the course of time came to acquire the same force as the Law itself. These have been preserved in the Mishna and the Talmud. Not infrequently the spirit of the original Law was lost in the endless hair-splittings of sharp-witted Rabbis, and occasionally it was set wholly at nought by their expositions. Hence it is that Jesu s

charges the scribes with making the Word of God of none effect by their traditions.

The same problems meet the teachers of the present day as in the time of Christ. And unhappily most teachers in every department of life are content to be scribes and nothing more.

Like the scribes of old they look upon the tradition of the past as something final and perfect, and look with suspicion on every advance that calls such finality in question.

But we cannot always live on tradition, or the findings of the past. Faith must move forwards and also become personal conviction. It is true that our religious beliefs come to us through tradition, and, so long as we are minors—that is, have not come of age, morally and intellectually—we are rightly subject to authority. But in due time we come of age in the matter of belief: youth with its unquestioning acceptance of tradition, passes, the capacity for judging evidence arrives, and when we come of age intellectually no truth can be rightly held save through personal conviction. Christ did not claim that His words should be accepted because He said them, but because they were true: "If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? They that are of the truth hear my voice." He that hath ears to hear will hear and understand. Sooner or later men come to their majority as moral and intellectual beings. But there are exceptions. Some men never cease to be minors in matters of religion, but remain all their life in bondage to some external authority. These

men are examples of arrested development, and remain infants in the sphere of faith, just as others remain infants in the sphere of intelligence, and others infants in the sphere of law. But some that are minors in the sphere of faith are not so by virtue of inherited defects, but have made themselves such by their own faithlessness. Lacking the courage and faith necessary to meet and overcome the doubts and fears and temptations that inevitably beset the awakening conscience and the growing intelligence, and that form the indispensable discipline of the noblest minds, they yield to their fears and return to the childish—not the childlike—attitude of abject submission to authority. Some also remain in the condition of minors from sheer intellectual indolence; they believe everything that authority tells them, in order to save themselves the fatigue of thinking.

But, if it is asked, Whence comes the authority of truth? The answer is that such authority springs from our consciousness of the truth and from nothing alien to itself. It is wrong to call truth authoritative, until it has won the conviction of our conscience. On the other hand, it would be just as wrong to deny the reality of every spiritual claim which has not yet won our homage. For divine truths can only make their appeal to the heart able and willing to receive them. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

Faith in the faculties which God has given us is the prerequisite of all kinds of knowledge. If these faculties are discredited, then divine truth is involved in the same condemnation, and he who challenges their

authority as the ultimate court of appeal is no better than an infidel. A religious rule, which cannot authenticate itself to the conscience, is no rule of duty or precept of obligation, but is at the best merely a maxim of policy or self-interest. So long as the moral law comes to us from without, we can evade its claims upon us, but when it has won the suffrage of our conscience we can no longer neglect its claims, save at the cost of conscious shame, self-reprobation, and remorse.

But it may be urged that our faculties are subject to the incursions of changing moods and fancies, which may enlighten or vitiate our perceptions, may quicken or benumb them. Hence they are not always to be trusted. This is quite true. But we are not to infer from thence that the distinctions of truth and falsehood, of right and wrong, are thus rendered capricious, and that our views of God and duty are dependent on our changing moods and fancies. This is not the fact. But it would be so, if we were always held captive by the same moods and were unable to distinguish one frame of mind from another, the worthy from the mean, the sound from the corrupt, our nobler from our shameful hours.

We must therefore use our judgment, however incompetent it is. Hence we insist here not on the right of using the judgment, but on the duty of using it and on the necessity of using it. Even if we renounce the right of private judgment and commit ourselves wholly to the guidance of some outward authority, we must use our judgment in deciding which amongst the con-

flicting authorities shall have our obedience. No man can divest himself of this duty, and the very attempt to renounce the use of his judgment is the weightiest and most unjustifiable instance of its exercise. Such unwise folk think they can determine by a single exercise of the judgment the whole issues and claims of truth and life before these arise—issues and claims which humbler and wiser folk seek with God's help to determine as they arise. The exercise of the judgment is inevitable in any case. For not only does it require an act of the judgment to change one's faith, but our continuance in our fathers' faith or in another we have adopted presupposes a decision of the judgment that we are right in so doing.

We have hitherto emphasised the absolute necessity of using our judgment in things religious as in other departments of life. This judgment may also be defined more narrowly as our "private judgment." But in this narrower definition we must be careful to see that the accent is to be put—not on the word "private," but on the word "judgment." Now, numbers of sectaries place the accent on the word "private"; they ask only that the individual, as an individual, should be satisfied, and so their principle is subjective, and there is no guarantee of agreement between different individuals. But if we place the accent on the word "judgment," then all is changed. For judgment is not yours, nor mine, nor his: it is a possession common to us all; a thing wherein we can meet and compare our findings and results, and obtain

in the measure of our objectivity some real measure of agreement.

Thus private judgment, with the accent on the word "private," is simply self-will, caprice; but with the accent on "judgment" it is the will subject to judgment, and therefore reasonable. Hence, when we maintain the right of private judgment, we maintain the right of the individual to share voluntarily in judgment, and so this right of entering by personal conviction into harmony with it. This is the indefeasible right of the individual. He is to be won through his judgment, through his conviction of the truth.

This decision of the judgment cannot be made on evidence furnished solely by the intellect. Let us suppose that we have accepted a doctrine or a body of doctrines on authority. Now if, when we arrive at the age of moral independence, we translate these doctrines into action, and find that they are capable of interpreting life's problems and of explaining its mysteries, in the course of such experiences the doctrines have ceased to be things imposed on us from without—that is, by mere authority. They have stood the test of experience and become part of our inmost being, and, though superrational in their source, they have shown their reasonableness by the moral and spiritual uplift they have given to our lives, and by their growing capacity to explain the world of our experience.

It follows from the conclusions at which we have already arrived as to the necessity of using our judgment and translating into action the moral truths we learn,

that we do not study the past to find an authoritative or infallible guide in dealing with the beliefs and problems of the present, but as a help to interpret these problems aright. The revelation of truth is progressive. The realised truth of no past age can satisfy the requirements of the age that now is. The problems and difficulties of the present were then unknown : they require, accordingly, an answer of their own. Hence every generation must do its own seeking and its own finding, and not take that of its predecessors simply on trust. It is the common fault of the fathers to expect that their findings can take the place of their children's seekings ; and that what they have found adequate to their own requirements must necessarily suffice for their children's needs. But the fact that the fathers found certain beliefs adequate to their needs is no ground for their children's unthinking acceptance of them. It has, however, this value : it encourages the children to seek for themselves, and assures them that their search, if it be but faithful, will not be in vain.

Passing for a moment from the problems of the ordinary seeker after truth to those of the trained researcher in religion, history, mathematics, or science, we can see clearly how these conclusions affect them. All original study of any great question imperatively demands freedom as the indispensable condition of success. The researcher, whose progress in any direction is hampered by conditions prejudicial to his quest for truth, can never speak on his subject as one having authority. To urge a man to such study and yet require

him under severe disabilities to come to the same conclusions as those who have made no such study, is at once a mockery and an imbecility. And yet this is what the Church of Rome requires from its scholars. What confidence, then, can be placed in conclusions of these scholars which are dictated to them at the outset. Scholars of the Roman Church know that if their conclusions do not harmonise with the accepted dogmas of their Church, their books will be placed on the *Index* and they themselves will probably incur excommunication. Rome wants to deal with its honest and original scholars as ancient Israel did with its prophets. In these days it can only silence or excommunicate them.

We repeat, therefore, if authority prescribes the conclusions at which we must arrive, then all sincerity in research is precluded, and the possibility of discovering truth by such research is doomed from the outset.

Freedom implies the widest toleration. Such toleration must, of course, be subject to some limits. There has never been in any age of the Church's history so wide a toleration as there was in the circle of our Lord's disciples and in the Pauline period.

It may be urged that such a wide toleration would issue in wild and extravagant speculations. No doubt it would in the case of not a few hare-brained individuals, but there is little danger that the great mass of sober-minded Englishmen would run to such extremes. The toleration of extreme opinions in the Church is a guarantee that those who hold moderate opinions hold them from personal conviction and not from fear of penalties.

Christ spake "as one having authority, and not as the scribes." A perfect personality is the supreme centre whence all true authority emanates. Most thoughtful men turn with indignation from the claims of an infallible Church; some thoughtful men find greater difficulties than help in a book which its ignorant votaries maintain to be verbally inspired; but no true man can withhold his reverence and faith from a perfect Personality. And yet, as we might expect, the self-evidencing truth of Christ's authority was not brought home to all who felt His loving touch or heard His inspiring words. He did not speak as one having authority to the priests and scribes. To the priests and scribes and kindred characters His appeal was in vain; He was not the fulfilment of their preconceived notions and expectations, and He did not satisfy their actual present wants. To become fit hearers of Christ's teaching they would have needed to be spiritually transformed.

The scribes, the Pharisees, and the masses of every generation approach Christ in the hope of having their own peculiar expectations and desires recognised and enforced, and failing in this object they turn away. Pre-eminent amongst these are the self-seeking, the self-opinionated, the narrow-minded, and the covetous of all times. For their own ends they may invoke His name but they disown His Spirit and abjure His authority.

And yet the scribes and Pharisees had before them the greatest power for the transformation of human character. For such a power was the perfect Personality before them, who was at once the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Having now showed in some degree the nature of our Lord's authority, we may naturally ask how He dealt with the religious leaders of His own day who called His authority in question. The answer is not far to seek. Our Lord criticised drastically the orthodox teachers of His own day, and in such criticism carried with Him the approval of such of His hearers as were open to conviction. But not only did He criticise the religious teachers of His own day; He criticised also its accepted creeds; He went further and dealt freely with the Old Testament itself, and in this respect was followed by St. Paul. Thus Christ and St. Paul were the greatest higher critics in the whole history of the Christian Church. Whilst the Jewish Church of that day insisted, even as it insists down to the present, on the Sabbath, on circumcision, and on the distinction between meats clean and unclean as things of eternal obligation and enforced as such in the Old Testament, our Lord definitely removed from the sphere of religious obligation the Old Testament conception of the Sabbath and the laws of clean and unclean meats, and St. Paul similarly withdrew the law of circumcision. In fact, throughout the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere, there is a continuous criticism of Old Testament teachings. Such criticism constituted practically an attack on the practice, rife then as at all times, of identifying religion with the intellectual expression it had assumed at some one period of its history. Now to intellectual conformity our Lord attached little importance. We hardly ever find Him testing His followers as to their intellectual

creed—expelling one as a sceptic and inhibiting another as an unbeliever. Doubt and uncertainty, so long as they were honest, were always treated by Him with the utmost consideration.

And in perfect keeping with the attitude He adopted on intellectual questions of doctrine, is that which He universally maintained on questions of right conduct. To moral excellence wherever found, whether in the Roman centurion, the Syrophenician woman, or the Samaritan, He extended a glad and willing recognition. "Verily," He declares, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." And since many of the soundest and most hopeful elements in the nation were outside the organised Jewish Church, we discover that His friends were not only amongst the unorthodox, but also amongst the classes ostracised by the religious leaders of the nation—that is, the publicans and sinners. The one test He gave to His disciples whereby to distinguish His true followers from the false, was the rule, "By their fruits ye shall know them."

There can, my brethren, be no final expression of divine truth here. In this world we can at the best see through a glass darkly. Hence any Christian Church that lays the chief emphasis—not on a spiritual life in Christ, but—on the acceptance of certain intellectual formulas, is breaking with the spirit of its Founder, and that of its greatest teachers, and must in due course become a sectarian and irreligious body. Such intellectualism, or the identification of a certain body of dogmas with religion, is in modern days paramount

in many quarters, and exactly in those quarters where we should least of all expect it—that is, in those Churches where the intellectual interests are feeblest, where ignorance is actually a spiritual or rather an ecclesiastical asset, and the rightful claims of the intellect are rigidly suppressed. Such Churches, however great their numbers, are essentially sects.

Having now dealt with the nature of the authority exercised by our Lord on intellectual and moral questions, it only remains to enforce in a few words the duty of the Church of England to follow in the steps of its Divine Master. Our Church must aim at spiritual unity and not at a soul-destroying uniformity in intellectual formulas or ritual usages. Spiritual unity is the essential note of the Church, as intellectual or ritual uniformity is an essential note of an unspiritual sectarianism. If the Church is to speak with authority, its authority must be such as to carry conviction with it alike on matters of doctrine and ritual. It must admit freely the right of reinterpreting its traditional symbols. From such reinterpretation nothing can be excluded, and any attempt to prevent such reinterpretation in the spheres of spiritual, moral, and intellectual knowledge is no better than a blind obscurantism, and can only end in its own annihilation. If our Church is faithful to the example of our Divine Master, it will surmount all the dangers of the coming days, and come to be, in a larger measure than it is at present, the great spiritual Mother of all true Englishmen and of all others akin to them.

XII.

TEMPTATION OF THE LESSER GOOD.

"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he afterwards hungered. And the tempter came and said unto him, If thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become bread. But he answered and said unto him, It is written, Man shalt not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."—MATT. iv. 1–4.

IN the first three Gospels Christ's ministry opens with a great spiritual parable — namely, the temptation. In this parable are set forth the principles on which the Kingdom of God is to be established and fulfilled. The temptation is not merely a testing of Christ for His great calling; rather it discloses first and chiefly His recognition of the spiritual laws, which are to regulate His Kingdom as opposed to the Jewish conception of it.

We have here the first definite enunciation of the character of the Kingdom. For, notwithstanding the plenitude of Old Testament and later prophecy regarding the coming Messiah, the conception of the Messiah and His Kingdom was in no case clearly defined, and, so far as it was defined, it approximated more to a

kingdom of this world than to the true Kingdom of God. Nor had the Baptist solved in the least the difficulties inherent in the traditional or popular expectations regarding the Messiah. These difficulties our Lord had Himself to face, and in the solitude of the wilderness to decide on the character and spirit in which He was to fulfil His mighty task. Christ's three temptations in the wilderness represent as in a parable the inward wrestlings of His spirit, as He confronted and rejected the popular conceptions of the Messiah and His Kingdom. But since these temptations affected Him, not only as Messiah, but also as man, they are fraught with meaning also for every man individually, and for every community of men, secular or ecclesiastical, throughout the world. For no decision to accept God's will and fulfil it is of real moral worth, unless there is a consciousness of what is accepted and what is rejected. When a man, a Church, or a nation has to choose between a higher and a lower good, the satisfactions promised by the lower good must have made their appeal and been rejected before the resolve to follow God's will has a spiritual value.

Now the three temptations of our Lord are definitely of this nature and none other. Christ was not tempted with evil, but with inferior forms of good, to have yielded to which would have been evil. And in some degree this holds true of most men. It is only the hardened offender who is attracted by evil as evil, whereas the strength and effectiveness of all temptation depend just on this, that the evil does not at the moment

present itself as evil, but as some form of lesser good, as something justifiable or necessary, or at all events desirable.

But we must here distinguish between our Lord's judgment of what is evil and that of other men. Our Lord's judgment of what was evil could be trusted, springing as it did from a life of unbroken communion with the Father. But of no other man could this be maintained. For even the best of men have never done that which they ought to have done, and the most pathetic confessions of infirmity come from the lips of the greatest saints. All men, therefore, have dimmed their powers of spiritual discernment and biased their judgment in regard to things good and evil. And this bias of the judgment is especially dangerous when the man is assured from experience that a certain duty has some claim on his obedience, and, knowing this, maintains its claims against those of some other duty, however much more divine the claims of such other duty may be. If, indeed, for the sake of gain or pleasure a man is ready to sacrifice friendship, truth, honour, the world is quite ready to condemn such an offender. But its verdict is less assured against the man who sacrifices truth and honour for the sake of love or friendship, or the claims of God for those of country. Herein there is a conflict of the good with the better, and when the good comes into conflict with the better it becomes its enemy and thereby a thing in itself evil.

But to return to the immediate subject of our Lord's temptation. In His case we cannot think of Him as

being tempted by evil at all; we cannot think of Him as being subject to the coarser temptations that assail with such violence the lower nature of man. We can only think of Him as being tempted on the higher levels on which He lived, where the flesh and mean ambitions could make no appeal. In the case of men in general the same law obtains in some degree. So far as a man keeps faithful from childhood to youth and from youth to manhood, he rises steadily to higher spiritual levels. To the higher character which he thus achieves a higher order of temptations address themselves; and just because of their higher appeal such temptations tend to prove more dangerous.

Temptation or the necessity of choosing between a lower and a higher good must meet the best of us every day of our lives. If with the help of Christ we are striving to do God's will, however often we fail, then we become in due time and inevitably that which we long and aspire to be, and though temptations will still come as tests and trials of our faithfulness, they will come also as great opportunities, attended with possibilities of larger service, with beckonings to a life of nobler and ever nobler achievement, with discoveries of ever higher vocation and ever loftier destiny.

Turning now to our text we read: "When he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he afterwards hungered." Since fasting occupied such a subordinate place in the teaching of Christ, and since, so far as the Gospel accounts go, He never had recourse to such an ascetic practice subsequently, we may infer that He

did not go into the wilderness with the purpose of imitating the asceticism of the Baptist, but that the forty days' fast was an undesigned result of His spiritual preoccupation, the natural accompaniment of a period of intense mental absorption. Hence, at the end of the forty days His whole system was exhausted, and exhaustion, reacting on a mind which was itself already worn out with its own thought, must have all but robbed Him of the direct consciousness of God's presence. How terrible, therefore, had the need of food become! And that all the more so, since He felt that to eat thereof would restore the lost vision of God. Now it is just at this juncture that the suggestion of the tempter comes, that, if He were the Son of God, the promised Helper of His people, then surely He should be able to help Himself in His own extreme need. Since, however, according to the teaching of the Gospels, it was God that wrought through Christ all His mighty works, and since in each case of crying need around Him the Son had to wait and see whether the Father willed Him to help therein, so likewise in His own extreme need He could not act otherwise. If the Father does not will Him to help Himself therein, the Son may not dare to help Himself; nay more, He could not. If God sends Him into the wilderness He must be content with the sustenance the wilderness affords. If God wills that He should provide Himself miraculously with food, then He could do so; but if God does not will Him to do so, then neither should He attempt to do so, nor could He actually do so, since the Son can do nothing

of this nature apart from the Father. "Of myself," He declares, "I can do nothing." In nothing was He to be beyond His brethren on earth save in His perfect fulfilment of God's will. It was the Father's business to take care of Him, it was His business to do His Father's will. To do otherwise would have been to distrust the Father. There was, therefore, no refuge, no help save in His Father's love and care. To the tempter, therefore, He replies in words drawn from the Old Testament: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Deut. viii. 3).

These words are from Deuteronomy, where it is said (viii. 1) that God led His people forty years through the wilderness to prove them and discipline them and teach them this very lesson, that man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Where Israel failed in its obedience, Christ in His true manhood was to be faithful. And the lesson is set to all men, and at some time or other in most men's lives the truth of this statement is recognised and fulfilled, and men are ready to give up wealth and position and life itself for country, for honour, for duty, for God. Man does not live by bread alone. Man's real life must be sustained by something better than by bread if he is to look backward without shame and go forward without fear. And our Lord makes it clear that the first care of His ministry is to do God's will; the rest is God's concern.

Thus in answer to the first temptation our Lord declares His absolute trust in God.

Thereupon comes the next attempt of the enemy. If such is your trust in God, put it to the proof: "If thou art the Son of God, cast thyself down, for it is written:

> "He shall give his angels charge concerning thee,
> And on their hands they shall bear thee up,
> Lest haply thou dash thy foot against a stone."

This new temptation is addressed not to the personal needs of Christ, as the former, but to His method of entering on His office and vocation. If Thou be the Son of God who is to redeem Israel, prove it by some great miraculous act wherewith Thou shalt gain the faith of Israel in Thee as God's messenger. The tempter urges Christ to accept the popular conception of the Messiah and hurl Himself into all the dangers of His calling, and for such self-willed action Satan promises Him the Divine protection from the Scriptures themselves.

Such a temptation might for a moment appeal to one who longed to enter immediately on His work with overwhelming credentials, but only for a moment. For its object could be none other than to force the hand of a God that tarried, that slumbered or slept, and was not awake to the urgent needs of His children on earth; it was a temptation also to Christ to make a short cut to success, and, by doing violence to and capturing man's convictions by means of miracle, to avoid the long pain and agony involved in man's moral and spiritual redemption.

Such a miraculous display, indeed, might convince

the onlookers that He who wrought the miracle possessed certain powers; and yet miracles could in themselves be no evidence of the claims He advanced. Marvels and wonders are speedily forgotten, and even before they are forgotten they come to be doubted as illusions of the senses; they cannot, therefore, in themselves convince of the truth; only the inward vision of truth itself is adequate to this end. Hence the temptation is rejected. Our Lord can bring in the Kingdom only in God's way. Not by a display of miracle or power, but only by spiritual service, by years of love and sacrifice, and centuries of seeming failure and defeat, can the Christ enter the hearts of the sons and daughters of the Father and establish therein the Kingdom of God—a Kingdom that shall never wane nor fail, but grow for evermore with the growing ages, alike in time and in eternity.

Thus to this temptation of Satan our Lord replies in words drawn again from Deuteronomy: "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Our Lord can no more claim God's protection upon paths chosen by Himself than for His own personal relief can He work miracles which God has not bidden Him to do.

Foiled in his attempt to make Christ distrust the Father's personal care of Him or enter on His ministry in any other way than God would have Him, the tempter has recourse to the third temptation. In the symbolic language of the narrative, Satan "taketh Christ up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of

them; and he said unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and do me homage." Here the conflict between self-chosen ways and the ways chosen by God reaches its climax. In the first two temptations the conflict was covert and only came into the open on reflection. But here the conflict between the will of God and the will of man is more obvious and easy to recognise, and yet, after all, not so easy; for the problem before Christ was this: Was He to accept the Messiahship as it was understood by the religious world of His day, or was He to reject it?

The Messiah whom His people expected was to be a Divine ruler, it is true, but it was no less true He was to be a patriot, the deliverer of Palestine, the King of Israel, as the prophets had constantly foretold. This worldly conception of the Messiahship with its combined appeal to religion and patriotism would at once rally His countrymen to His side. If He placed Himself at their head, all the initial difficulties of His task would be surmounted. And to attain this end He had only to accept the lower of two good methods presented to Him. He had only to adopt the rôle of a patriotic Messiah, and having thereby won over the people He could fulfil the Messiah's higher rôle and bring them into subjection to the true Kingdom of God, and later convert the whole world of the Gentiles. It would, after all, be only adopting a lesser good—a course of which all His people would have approved—in order that a higher good might be realised. This was the spiritual temptation which is translated into the concrete terms

of our text: "All these things will I give Thee, if thou wilt fall down and do me homage." You will observe that I do not follow the English translation here, since it translates exactly in the same words two phrases which are distinct in the Greek, and which we may infer were distinct in the Aramaic used by our Lord. According to the Greek, the tempter does not say: "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me," but, "If thou wilt do me homage," just as if He said: "All I ask is a mere gesture in acknowledgment of my claims and nothing more." The Greek verb used here has two constructions in St. Matthew;[1] with the dative it means "to do homage to"; with the accusative it means "to render worship to"—a worship which could be rendered only to God. Now, in answer to the tempter our Lord replies: "Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Here the Greek verb is followed by the accusative. His reply may, therefore, be paraphrased as follows: What thou askest is homage, it is true, but such an act of homage, however slight in itself, would in effect be worship, and worship can be rendered to none but God: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." This subtle use of the

[1] See Abbott, *Johannine Vocabulary*, 135 seq. In Matt. iv. 9, 10 the ancient Syriac (Cur. and Sin.)—but not the Peshitto—carefully distinguish them. In Revelation, on the other hand, the writer uses προσκυνεῖν, with the dative to express "worship" and with the accusative to express "homage." The Aramaic in the Jerusalem Targums has two distinct verbs to express these two ideas.

same verb with two different constructions in order to express two different meanings puts before us forcibly the nature of all temptation. No evil thing, as we have seen, presents itself as evil, unless to depraved natures, but as some form of good, or as something desirable, or politic, or necessary. Here the temptation was to adopt the method of saving His brethren, which the Jews would have understood and welcomed instead of God's method. If He would but adopt this Jewish conception of the Messiah He could count on the recognition and support of the whole nation, on the immediate deliverance of His country from foreign bondage, and, if the prophets of old were to be believed, on the conquest of the whole Gentile world.

But to know the higher good and adopt the lower, to lead His people onwards as towards the best when their real object was not the best—what was this but doing homage to the spirit of this world? To flatter His people's pride by making them conquerors of their national enemies instead of their own spiritual evils—what was this but to do homage, nay rather, to render worship, to Satan, the lord of all the misrule of this world and of all the bitterness of its pain?

Thus to accept His people's conception of the Messiahship would be not to bring in the Kingdom of God and His righteousness into a world distraught with sin, but to accept the world as Satan's kingdom, and by His own act to confirm Satan's kingship in its position of usurped authority. Hence our Lord replies to the tempter: "Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written,

Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

Foiled and defeated, the tempter withdrew, and "angels came and ministered unto him." The moments that follow the triumphant conquest of temptation are amongst the happiest and noblest that the heart of man can experience. Their blessedness can only be known through experience, or described in language borrowed from the imagery of heaven; for to the faithful in their weariness God's angels come and minister.

Hitherto we have considered the temptations in their individual reference, first as affecting our Lord and next as affecting His servants. But the third temptation has lessons not only for individuals, but for nations as nations and for Churches as Churches.

A nation can be tempted as well as an individual, and through yielding to such temptation can bring about its own overthrow. History teaches that no nation goes to destruction save through its own vices. To each in turn the tempter addresses himself: All that you set your heart on I will give you if you do me homage, and accept the methods I prescribe.

And with no nation since the Christian era has the fiend been so successful as with the German peoples. He has taken them up into a high mountain and shown them all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; and they have bowed down to Satan and worshipped, and have become their slaves.

Unhappy Germany and Austria, and most unhappy

in this, that every fresh crime against God and humanity had been attended with increased material prosperity. Most unhappy; for so long as they achieve these material successes they will scrap every spiritual and moral obligation that binds one man to another, one nation to another, and all men to God; nor will they become conscious of their spiritual bondage till defeat and failure strike home, and they recognise at last the full bitterness of their thraldom and the place they had so light-heartedly forsaken in the Commonwealth of God. And into this Commonwealth of God it is our heartfelt prayer that the Central Powers may at no distant day return.[1]

But it is not only secular Powers that have yielded to the temptations of the Evil One. Again and again Christian Churches have failed, and never in some instances more manifestly than in the present war.

Yet never in the history of the world has there been a time when all the Churches should speak with such authority and clearness as at the present crisis. This most of the Christian Churches are doing; nor could they do otherwise; for the spiritual issues are so definite and insistent that not a single soul stands outside the moral conscription they are enforcing, and the consciences of all men are steadily enrolling themselves on the side of the Allies, save those who have preferred safety to honour and gain to righteousness. But unhappily this is not true of all the Churches; for to

[1] I have let this and the following paragraphs stand, as they relate at once to contemporary secular and ecclesiastical history.

this moral conscription the Roman Church in its official capacity at the Vatican has refused to hearken. How unfathomable is the gulf that yawns between the conduct of the Papacy and its claims!

For though the present Pope declared himself soon after the beginning of the war to be "the interpreter and avenger of eternal law," [1] and claims also to be the infallible mouthpiece of God on earth, he has tragically failed to vindicate the claims of even the most elementary morality.

When every nation of the earth has been rising up in judgment against Germany and Austria, this self-designated Vicar of God on earth has contented himself with pronouncing a few vague and harmless platitudes against war and atrocities in general, and carefully refrained from visiting with spiritual or ecclesiastical penalties the undoubted perpetrators of the infamies committed in Belgium, in France, in Serbia, in Roumania, and in Armenia. With a view purely to power and gain, millions of human beings have been mutilated, starved, raped, murdered by two criminal nations, and yet the Pope has never once definitely condemned these criminals.

Is it possible that the Pope is unacquainted with the atrocities and horrors committed for the lowest material ends by the Central Powers? This cannot for a moment be maintained; for reports were laid before him signed by unimpeachable witnesses, clerical and lay, and duly authenticated through diplomatic and other channels.

[1] In a Consistory of the Vatican, January 22, 1915.

No indictments of a similar nature were brought before the Pope against the English and French forces— for the simple reason that none such could be.

Why, then, did the Pope fail to condemn the guilty? The answer comes from the Vatican itself, which declares that it would be invidious for the Pope to condemn definite acts on the part of any of the contending Powers, seeing that his spiritual subjects were fighting in the ranks of all the belligerents. What does this amount to other than that, if the Vatican has convictions, it has neither the honesty nor courage to act in accordance with them? Material and wholly secular considerations have stepped in and prevented the issue of the Pope's anathema on the monstrous and shameful acts of his spiritual children in Germany and Austria. The Vatican has fondly thought that it could hide its turpitude under the guise of neutrality. But can it be maintained that the Vatican has preserved its neutrality? The answer to this question may be safely left to history when it deals with the action of the Roman hierarchy in Ireland and elsewhere. But even if the Vatican preserved the most perfect neutrality, could such neutrality be justified on the part of a spiritual and moral authority? Not possibly. Where there is a moral conscription of the whole world, such neutrality is immoral and antichristian. He that is not with Christ in this strife of heaven and hell is against Him. The tempter has taken the Pope up into an exceeding high mountain and shown him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, has promised him the

enlargement of his authority within the Central Powers, and its extension over other lands and other Churches, and all that the tempter has asked him is simply that he should be silent, that he should hold his peace, and neither censure nor denounce the objects and methods of the Central Powers. And the man who is the spiritual head of the Roman Church has bowed the head and done homage. Is it to be wondered at that last week a Roman Catholic writer in the *Times* described the Vatican as the betrayer of humanity and the betrayer of Christ? or that for like reasons as far back as fifty years ago Lord Acton, perhaps the most learned Roman Catholic historian for the last four hundred years, branded the Vatican as "the fiend skulking behind the crucifix"?

Surely when its own sons so condemn it, it is time for the Vatican to break with its evil traditions, and, returning into the communion of Christ, say to the ruler of the darkness of this world, Get thee hence, Satan. As for me and my children, we will worship the Lord our God, and Him only will we serve.

XIII.

THE LOST SON.

"Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."—LUKE xv. 21.

THE Prodigal Son forms, perhaps, the most touching and beautiful of all our Lord's parables. It follows, as you remember, the parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin. The three were clearly uttered on the same occasion, and the nature of that occasion is given in the opening verses of this chapter: "Now all the publicans and sinners were drawing near unto him for to hear him. And both the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." Here the official leaders of Israel find fault with our Lord for consorting with the lapsed masses, and in answer to their fault-finding He puts forward these three parables, not only to defend His own attitude to these classes, but also to censure theirs. But with the apologetic purpose we are not here concerned, but rather with two other truths which they set forth—that is, the seeking love of God going forth after the lost classes of mankind, and their response thereto.

The first—God's part in man's salvation—is put forward in the parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin; while the second—man's share in his own salvation—is portrayed in the parable of the Lost Son. Christ therein describes the rise and growth of repentance in the heart of man in response to the seeking love of God. Thus these two complementary ideas—the seeking love of God and the faith thereby awakened in man—form a complete and harmonious whole.

The opening scene of the parable is in the father's house. There are two sons, and of these the younger is not satisfied with living at home. He must see the world and enjoy its pleasures. So he asks his father for his share of the inheritance. As there were two sons, and he the younger, his share, according to the Levitical law, amounted to one-third of his father's possessions, since the eldest son always received a double portion. And as soon as the younger son received his share of the inheritance he went off into a far country with the deliberate resolve of getting all the gratification he could out of life, and of enjoying untrammelled liberty in all his conduct. The young man's idea of liberty was one that could not be indulged in his father's presence. It was liberty to do evil. Hence to attempt such a life would have made him ashamed and uncomfortable under his father's eye. And so he went far away—he was only carrying into execution the purposes that had hitherto been long concealed. He was a prodigal in heart before he became so in life. How true is this picture of the man bent on the indulgence

of his own desires and self-will! When he is resolved on following his own will, in defiance of God's will, he naturally strives to get out of God's presence—he deliberately puts away the thought of God, for he seeks to indulge his inclinations and desires untroubled by outward circumstances or the inward voice of conscience.

But why did the father give the goods? Here the probabilities of the earthly story are somewhat strained in order to express the heavenly truth it embodies. The father, if he possessed any insight into his son's character, must have observed the dangerous trend it was taking, and could not therefore have assented to his request. But the exigencies of the parable required his assent, since here the father stands as the representative of God, who will not have a forced obedience and whose gifts are without repentance. When a man's heart is alienated from God, God will not through His power constrain him and make him a slave; nay, He will only have willing service. If our chief desire is for God's gifts and not for Himself, God gives us our desire that we may find out the worthlessness of all things apart from Him.

So the prodigal went into the far country and there gave himself up to every indulgence his heart lusted after; self-will and lawless desires reigned supreme, and he wasted his substance in riotous living among the drunkards and the harlots of the far country. And then there arose a mighty famine in that land, and it reached unto him, and he began to be in want. Here we have the picture of a soul estranged from God in its downward

progress. Its wretchedness does not discover itself in the earliest stages. The world has manifold attractions, the flesh many pleasures, and these cannot be exhausted in a moment. But to a bankruptcy of all the material and other pleasures he rated so highly the sinner is coming sooner or later. At last the end of all the gratification the man can get arrives, and then the mighty famine of that land strikes home; for that land can never furnish the wherewithal upon which the soul of man can live.

But it is not only the riotous livers that are prodigals. They also are prodigals who use solely for self-indulgence or self-advancement the good things which God has given them, and for these also, however uniquely gifted with powers of mind and outward possessions, there arises sooner or later the famine in the far country. Give such men the greatest portion of goods that they have craved for in the wildest dreams of their covetousness and ambition—give them health, strength, wealth, power, and gratified ambition, and these in such unmeasured abundance that there seems to be no limit to the fulness of their enjoyment. And yet if we ask what history has to tell of these men, we find that it is just this—that when they have mastered the ends they had in view, indulged their desires, their loves and hatreds as they would, and, in short, enjoyed their good things to the full; and just because they have enjoyed them to the full they, too, begin to feel a famine in that land in which they had sought to naturalise themselves, they come to be filled with the weariness of satiety and

disappointment, with a weariness even of life itself. And they are forced to confess that life in any case does not consist in the abundance of the things which a man possesses, and that, if there is some end in life which satisfies the soul, they, with all their gifts and opportunities, have failed to secure it. But even men more highly gifted than these cannot be acquitted of the prodigal's aim and the prodigal's doom, who claim selfish and solitary possession of the goods their Father lavishes upon them. However richly endowed with wealth of imagination, with the treasures of the affections, the inventor's skill, the scientist's originality, or the scholar's insight, in fact with everything that distinguishes and ennobles man as man, the men who use these purely for their own ends and for the gratification of their own ambitions go, like the prodigal, into the far country, and sooner or later find the famine arise in their souls, unless they have succeeded in naturalising themselves and made themselves temporary citizens in that country which knows not God. Thus for a man to incur the charge of being a prodigal it is not necessary that he should be notorious for his self-indulgence or wrong-doing. It is quite enough that he is living for ends lower than God willed him. Such a life must always issue in spiritual atrophy and in spiritual starvation.

But to return to the parable. The prodigal in his want turns to one of the citizens of the far country, and, notwithstanding the reluctance of this citizen to render him any help, the prodigal, driven by the im-

portunity of hunger, constrains the unwilling man to give him service. The citizen is a new character in the parable. He represents the class that had taken out letters of naturalisation in the far country and made it their home: that had drunk the Circean cup to the dregs, and so transformed their nature that they had silenced the higher life within them—at all events for the time—and have henceforth no satisfactions higher than the contentedness of well-fed oxen or the peace of sated swine. But the prodigal is not so far sunk as yet; with all his guilt and shame he is not yet a citizen, but a stranger in the far country; he is wretched and unhappy there; but the citizen is comfortable and satisfied, and herein infinitely more miserable than the poor prodigal who is in want; for there is still hope for the man who feels himself an alien and an outcast in the land of sin.

But though still an alien in the far country, his steady degradation is marked. He had gone into that country to find enjoyment, and he had found starvation; he had aimed at using his neighbours there as the slaves of his self-will, and he had himself become their thrall; he had sought unbridled liberty of action, and had fallen into bondage, and the very scenes which had witnessed his licence had now become the grave of his freedom. His longing for husks or carob-pods pictures the intensity of his hunger, and his feeding of swine the shamefulness of his servitude as a son of Abraham. He would fain have been filled with the husks, not "filled his belly," as the Authorised Version has it,

for he could easily have done that, but the right reading, as in the Revised Version, denotes that he would fain have been filled—that is, satisfied with the husks that the swine did eat. The same words "to be filled" are used in St. Luke (vi. 21), "Blessed are ye that hunger: for ye shall be filled"—that is, satisfied to the full. But no such satisfaction was to be procured in the far country, only servitude and a famine of all that whereon the soul of man can live.

At last the prodigal "came to himself." Heretofore the prodigal had been living a shallow and superficial life—a life of mean desire and debasing profligacy. The higher nature within him had been wholly denied expression and atrophied by disuse. In fact, he was entirely ignorant of the religious needs and instincts latent within him; he was a stranger to nothing so much as to his own soul and its true needs. But there comes a time in the lives of most, if not of all, men when, under the stress of critical emergencies and experiences, the soul is moved and the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the man is brought face to face with the main facts of existence—himself, God, judgment, and eternity, and then at last he discovers that God alone can satisfy the hunger of the soul—and so he becomes a seeker after God, as God designed that all men should be. Constituted as he is, man must sooner or later seek God or else perish miserably; and since he cannot always escape from the importunate claims of the spiritual element within him—that is, his soul—he cannot always escape from God. And the more he

comes to himself the more persistent, the more profound, the more passionate becomes the cry of his soul for God, even for the Living God.

But at the outset the repentance of the prodigal was not of a high type ; it did not spring from any exalted motive. He may have experienced possibly a certain undefined dissatisfaction and unrest, springing from latent needs within him; of which he had as yet no clear consciousness ; but so far as he regretted his past conduct it was from no lofty motive—it was mainly from hunger that he did so. Hunger, abject poverty, stern necessity, baffled hopes, unrequited affections, irredeemable failure, and wrecked ambitions have often brought home wisdom, or at all events prudence, to the heart of the most foolish prodigals. The prodigal in the parable was as yet only in the initial stage of coming to himself. "How many hired servants of my father's," he reflects, "have bread enough and to spare." So he resolves to return to the home he had so light-heartedly and irresponsibly forsaken, and he carefully prepares the confession with which he will greet his father : "I will arise and go to my father, and say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son ; make me as one of thy hired servants "—those hired servants, he reflects, who had bread enough and to spare, while he was perishing from hunger.

It is not a high repentance ; indeed, it is hardly of the nature of repentance at all, for this postulates a real change of mind. But it is a very common type of

repentance—not only common, but might we not say universal, type—in the case of all men at some time in their lives. We turn to God, when something else on which we had staked our all for the time being fails us — health gives way, hopes are disappointed, the spirit is broken; or else we gain all our ends in this world—we achieve the position we sought, enjoy the pleasures we craved for, indulge our hatreds and revenges to the full; but however long we appear to prosper in this evil way, at last the years find our souls emptied of God and spiritually lifeless; dead in trespasses and sins. And then through some blessed visitation of God we come to ourselves, and in coming to ourselves we come to God—come to Him for comfort, for forgiveness, for peace, for a place in our Father's house—never again to be relinquished or forsaken; and the wonder is that God receives us, yea, and, if we return with a son's heart, gives us above all that we can ask or think. This very fact, that when people are disappointed in their earthly aims they turn to religion for the unknown good they have missed, has been the butt of many a sarcasm, and yet there is no ground for the world's sneer. For all the suffering and anguish the prodigal endures he has brought upon himself through his wrong-doing, and this suffering and anguish have been the punishment and discipline, ordained of God, for such as transgress the law of their being. But the object of such punishment is remedial. We see this in the case of children. Children are punished for wrong-doing and disobedience, not with the object that they shall always abstain from them

through fear of punishment, but that they may finally become good and obedient from higher motives. We reward a child for learning and doing right, not that he may always love knowledge for its rewards and love right from motives of self-interest, but that he may come ultimately to seek knowledge for itself, and to love righteousness and truth for their own sake. So the prodigal is punished in the line of his own wrong-doing that he may give up his wrong-doing and come to love and obey his father from right and disinterested motives.

We have emphasised the fact that the prodigal's repentance was a low repentance to begin with—his spiritual nature was still slumbering; but when once the prodigal returned and was embraced in his father's arms, his very repentance was repented of, and his higher nature was waked through his father's love. He no longer bargains for a place among those hired servants who have bread enough and to spare, but he thinks only of the great love of his father, against which he had sinned so grievously, and so he confesses, "I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." The confession has now become a reality; it is not now put forward as a plea on which to base a mercenary appeal for material help. These words form his sole and entire confession. The interested claim, "Make me as one of thy hired servants" is omitted—in fact, he forgets it wholly. He seeks only to be restored to his father's love. He has become at last truly repentant. And so it is ever, my brethren, that, however low may be the motives from which a

man turns to God, if the man ever really meets God, his repentance will be purified; it will not be for the comforts of heaven, it will not be from fear of hell, but it will be because the man has come to hate his sin, and longs to be delivered from it, has come to love God for Himself, and not for His gifts, and to know that in God, and in Him only, is his sure and exceeding great reward. This growing consciousness of dissatisfaction and unrest, deepening into the sense of sin and guilt, is at the heart of all true personal religion worthy of the name. In healthy and matured minds this consciousness of sin is no mere passing emotion, but a source of unquenchable sorrow and trouble of heart, and is the experience, not of our weaker moments, but of our sanest and manliest hours, and for it there is no relief, no healing save in God's infinite compassion and love revealed in His Son who has come to save mankind.

Men and women, ye who are haunted and oppressed by undying memories of passion, or dishonour, or unworthiness, of sin in some one of its countless forms of meanness or of shame, who in your hopelessness are still living in the far country aloof from God, you have no just grounds for remaining there and yielding to such despair; for God's love is more profound than the deepest depths into which our humanity can sink. Such has been the belief of the men who in all lands and in all ages have stood nearest to God, have known His love and experienced His grace and infinite compassion, and such the teaching of the New Testament writers; for while one assures us that God is able to save unto the uttermost

all that come unto Him through Christ, another declares that God's very faithfulness and justice are pledged to the repentant soul; for, "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Let us, then, take to God our sins, our backslidings, our sad disloyalties, our troubles of heart, and while we confess these in deepest abasement before Him, we may be assured that, if our confession voices the supreme desire of our hearts, God will grant us deliverance from our sin, will bestow upon us His forgiveness, His peace, His joy, which the world, with all its charm, and wealth, and pleasure, cannot give, and the world, with all its lures, and craft, and might, can never take away.

XIV.

WICKED HUSBANDMEN—RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND OTHER.

"Hear another parable: There was a man that was a householder, which planted a vineyard, . . . and let it out to husbandmen, and went into another country. And when the season of the fruits drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, to receive his fruits. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. . . . But afterwards he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But the husbandmen, when they saw the son, said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and take his inheritance."—MATT. xxi. 33–38.

IN the words preceding this parable it is told that the representatives of the Sanhedrin—that is, certain chief priests and scribes and elders—had come to Christ as He was teaching in the Temple, and demanded of Him, "By what authority doest thou these things? And who gave thee this authority?" To appreciate the seriousness of this incident, we must remember that all authority to legislate on matters in religion was lodged in the hands of the Council of which these men were the envoys. According to their decision, a man's teaching was recognised as orthodox or unorthodox, and the man himself as a teacher from God or the

converse. This demand of the Jewish authorities our Lord met at once by a counter-demand, wonderful alike in its simplicity and its far-reaching conclusions: "The baptism of John, whence was it? From heaven, or from men?" Now, since John's career was finished and public opinion had pronounced finally in his favour as a prophet truly come from God, these religious leaders of the people could not venture to dispute the national verdict. And yet, while John lived, they had definitely refused to recognise his claims as a prophet. Thus they were placed in an awkward dilemma by Christ's question. On the one hand, if they should bow to the national verdict regarding John, they would thereby convict themselves of having been wrong in their judgment about John when he was living; and, further, they would also be obliged to acknowledge, in some degree, the claims of Christ, to whom John has borne witness. If, on the other hand, they should dispute this verdict and declare that John was not a prophet, they would draw upon themselves the wrath of the people, who would stone them with stones, seeing that all men held John to be a prophet. Hence they replied to Christ's demand, "We do not know." Thereupon our Lord rejoined, "Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things." Thus the religious leaders of Israel are convicted of insincerity and unfaithfulness, and their decision as to whether a man's mission was Divine or otherwise was thus shown to have no moral or religious value. And yet it was distinctly their duty to form some authoritative judgment on John's mission, but,

since they could not decide whether it was from heaven or from men, they obviously showed themselves equally unfitted to sit in judgment on the credentials of Christ.

Such betrayals of their official duties are not confined to Judaism. Christian authorities have often through the centuries been guilty of the same treachery, but never on so gross a scale as in the recent war. Two opposing Christian Churches stand forth equal in guilt—the Reformed Churches of Germany and the Church of Rome. The Reformed Churches of Germany pronounced all but unanimously their benediction on Germany's infamous invasion of Belgium and France. The pulpits of these Churches had been filled by nominees of the State, and so, like the four hundred prophets attached to Ahab's Court, they promised victory to their country. Here wrong ideas of patriotism and less worthy motives had corrupted the Reformed Churches. But even among them there were, as in Israel, many Micaiahs, who suffered for their denunciation of their country's wrong-doing.

But still more analogous to the action of the Jewish Council was that of the Roman Church in the recent war. As the Jewish Council claimed to be the only authoritative expounder of the infallible Law of Moses, so the Roman Church claims to be the infallible judge between God and man. Hence it rehearsed exactly the same part that was played by the Jewish authorities when confronted by Christ's demand, "Whence was it? From heaven or from men?" When all the nations were locked in mortal strife, and quite a third of

Christendom in its agony besought the Roman authorities to declare on which side truth and righteousness lay, the Papacy, through fear of endangering its secular interests, repeatedly stated, "We do not know," and so took its seat, metaphorically, on the fence till the sincerer and sounder elements of the world settled the question without it. Truly it was the most pitiable spectacle the world has ever witnessed of moral faithlessness and shameless insincerity.

Having thus been forced—and that before the people—to confess their incompetence in the province which they claimed to be peculiarly their own, the Jewish authorities would no doubt have gladly retired from the scene of their discomfiture. But Christ refuses to let them go. Having used the question regarding John in self-defence, Christ now acts on the offensive, and attacks the Jewish authorities directly in three parables,[1] which teach that the religious leaders of the nation had betrayed their trust, that the Kingdom of God would be taken from them and be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits of righteousness. In the first parable, that of the Two Sons, the leaders of Judaism are shown to have been unfaithful to their covenant with God; and are told that the publicans and sinners are going into the Kingdom of God before them. The exasperation of the priests and elders naturally grew in the measure of their exposure by Christ and of their powerlessness to meet Him on the ground they had themselves chosen. They had clearly got the worst of it in the

[1] The Two Sons, the Wicked Husbandmen, the Marriage Feast,

controversy they had so imprudently provoked, but, seeing no hope of getting the better of this young Galilean Prophet, they were proceeding to withdraw, when, with the abrupt imperious words, "Hear another parable," Christ requires them to remain and listen to a parable which implicitly would answer the question they had put forward as to His authority, and explicitly would describe the doom awaiting them if they persisted in their present evil opportunism.

This parable is an expansion and reinterpretation of Isaiah's great parable of the Vineyard. There is a special fitness in Christ's choice of Isaiah's parable as the basis of His own; for it was so familiar to all His hearers that they could appreciate its bearings on the present crisis, and could not fail to apply its lessons to the persons and conditions involved.

In his parable of the Vineyard, Isaiah (v. 1–7) describes in symbolical language the relations existing between God and Israel. Isaiah writes: "My beloved had a vineyard on a very fruitful hill; and he made a trench about it . . . and planted it with the choicest vines, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also hewed out a wine-press therein; and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could I have done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now go to—I will tell you what I will

do to my vineyard : I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be burnt up ; I will break down the fence thereof, and it shall be trodden down ; and I will lay it waste . . . for the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant. And he looked for judgment, but behold oppression ; for righteousness, but behold a cry."

Taking this Old Testament Scripture as the basis of His parable, our Lord proceeds : " There was a man that was a householder, which planted a vineyard, and set a hedge about it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into another country. And when the season of the fruits drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, to receive his fruits."

First, we observe here that the householder is not merely the purchaser or owner of the vineyard ; he has planted it ; he has done everything for it that was necessary before he let it out to husbandmen. The exact terms on which the husbandmen rented the vineyard are not expressly given, but it is clear that they had covenanted with the householder to give him a fixed proportion of the fruit each season. To such details as the hedge, the wine-press, and the tower we will not attempt to attach any special significance. For our present purpose we are concerned only with the living agents in the parable and their conduct. This vineyard, as we have already learnt from the passage in Isaiah, signifies the nation as a whole. This being so, the husbandmen are the ecclesiastical leaders of the nation, and, just as obviously the servants sent from

time to time to receive the fruits thereof are the prophets. Thus the servants represent the prophets that were commissioned by God at various critical epochs in Israel's history, each entrusted with his own direct task and message ; while the husbandmen were the permanent ecclesiastical authorities of the nation. How the nation and its ecclesiastical leaders treated the prophets is set forth in the parable in the following terms : " He sent his servants to the husbandmen, to receive his fruits. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another." These words graphically describe the treatment dealt out by Israel and its leaders to God's messengers in the past. And this tale of their evil behaviour in that past cannot but have suggested to the consciences of Christ's hearers that a similar wrong spirit was dominating their religious leaders in the present. Had they not rejected the mission of the Baptist ? And were they not now rejecting Him to whom the Baptist had borne witness ? Their question, " By what authority doest thou these things, and who gave thee this authority," had just been shown by the young Prophet to be a blind to conceal the insincerities of the Jewish authorities and their antagonism to any fresh messenger from God. They were always ready to profess their homage to Divine authority, but it was a lip homage ; for they were just as ready to treat it with contempt when it failed to accord with their special traditions, canons, or wishes. The priestly and traditional mind has, as a rule, been antagonistic to the prophetic. And yet

whatever inspiration lies behind the doctrines and practices of the priests, springs from the prophetic teaching of the past, and not from the priestly. But, as a rule, the priests did not adopt the prophetic teachings of the past till they had put to death the prophets that gave them. Old Testament history is a continuous testimony to this fact.

Now such a temper tends to grow worse with indulgence. This fact is emphasised in our Lord's parable, according to which the husbandmen beat the first servant, slew the second, and stoned to death the third—a series of crimes wherein the guilt deepens as it advances. It is therefore no strange thing that the parable proceeds to describe a final enormity on the part of the husbandmen far transcending any crime of theirs in the past. "Afterwards," our Lord continues, "he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But the husbandmen, when they saw the son, said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and take his inheritance. And they took him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him." These words point clearly to the Crucifixion of Christ by the religious leaders of Judaism, and the subsequent overthrow of the nation. The husbandmen think that if they can kill the heir, they shall no longer be troubled with demands for fruit; that practically they shall become the owners of the vineyard of which hitherto they have been only tenants. This expectation is based on the long impunity they had enjoyed, notwithstanding their disobedience. Because judgment has not been executed

speedily, they imagine it will not be executed at all. But how profoundly they misconceive the inevitable course and claims of justice ; they have only exhausted the patience and goodwill of the owner of the vineyard, and filled up the measure of their guilt. It is the common failing of all privileged classes, corporations, guilds, and unions to think only of their rights, real or imaginary, and not of their duties. The religious leaders of Israel had used their great official position for their own glory, and insisted to the full on all their privileges ; but they had forgotten, or failed to discharge aright, the indispensable duties attaching to their offices, which alone could justify their retention of them.

With such privileged classes we first of all naturally identify the Churches ; for their duties and privileges are the highest of all, and from them God will require the greatest return of service. The Church that looks first to its rights and only in the second place to its duties, is very far from the ideal Church of Christ. It is claiming as its own what are merely temporary and delegated privileges, and is thinking more of its claims and prerogatives than of its bounden duty and service. The end of such a Church must be its rejection by God.

But the parable applies to all privileged corporations and classes, and these embrace not only the governing, capitalist, or professional and other middle classes, but also every class into whose hands the real power of the country passes ; and that class at the present day is unquestionably that of the manual workers. The old

order is steadily yielding place to the new. How will the world of manual labour view its new duties, privileges, and powers? What will it do for England, for the great Commonwealth that sums up the splendour and the pride of all that was noble in England's past? Under the guidance of the other classes England has become what it is—the foremost Empire in the world, foremost in power, foremost in authority, and, above all, foremost in its conceptions of duty and equity. Moreover, however many may have been the failings of the régime which is passing away, one of its last acts was to give, and to give without stint, its best and noblest for God, King, and country, and to levy such taxes upon itself as no other nation in the past has ever done. Will the new rulers of England carry on the great tradition of the past, and tax themselves proportionately with the other classes for the commonweal, or will they act like the wicked husbandmen, and strive mainly to secure their own interests at the cost of the other classes? The immediate outlook is not favourable. Many of the trade unionists, like the basest of the profiteering capitalists, are confessedly and unblushingly out for all they can get. No objection can be raised against their struggle for a reasonable wage and a higher standard of living. In such a struggle they have the sympathy of all good men on their side. But we cannot condemn too strongly the dishonest return that so many of them are making for such wage, and the systematic lessening of their output in return for that wage. Such a procedure is essentially fraudulent. The base motive,

which in earlier generations turned here and there certain workers into work-shy labourers or shirking artisans, has of late been adopted not only as a guiding principle but as an iron law of labour, which no trade unionist can disobey save at his peril, as, for instance, among the bricklayers. It is true that from many quarters protests have been raised against this vicious principle, and especially by notable leaders of Labour, who recognise that, unless this malignant cancer in the body politic is excised, it will inevitably destroy the nation.

The eyes of all men are at present fixed upon the miners, who are labouring under a very malignant type of this disease. In the worst crisis of the war they held the country to ransom, and achieved their selfish ends. Last year, whilst steadily securing higher wages, they pressed strongly for the nationalisation of the mines. They professed that in so doing they were acting in the interests of the public at large. They were grieved, they assured us, by the extravagant prices paid for coal by the consumer, and they constantly denounced in unmeasured terms the profiteering of the mine-owners as the cause of all the evil. When they failed to secure nationalisation through the veto of their own fellow-unionists, they threw to the winds their profound concern for the poor consumer, and determined to do all the profiteering themselves, and shamelessly avowed that such was the object of their crusade. Their aims were mercenary and irredeemably selfish; for they knew that if their demands were granted it could only be at the cost of nine-tenths of the other members of

the nation. The last chapter of the history of this industrial struggle is no less sordid. When the Government, having finally recognised the demoralising and pauperising effects of subsidies on all industries, introduced a few nights ago in the House of Commons the Mines Decontrol Bill, it was opposed by the mining members, who clearly showed that what they wanted was the continuance of the State subsidy. Now, why did they demand the continuance of this subsidy? The reason is not difficult to discover. If this subsidy is withdrawn, and the entire profits of the mines be handed over exclusively to the miners, they will in themselves prove to be wholly insufficient to pay the extravagant wages the miners now enjoy. Hence these spoilt children of industry ask their countrymen to put their hands in their pockets and grant them such a dole as will maintain their wages at their present artificial and uneconomic level. Many of the mine-owners have been not one whit less grasping and inconsiderate of the claims of the other nine-tenths of the nation. Now it is time for the mining industry to stand on its own feet, and for the miners to produce a just return for the wages they receive. Either the miners must render much more efficient service for their present wages or, failing this, their labour must be paid at its just economic value. In every industry the cost of production must be less than the price its commodities fetch in the market; less, that is, than the price that consumers are able or willing to pay. Happily owners and miners are at present taking counsel together, and there is a

good prospect of their being able to establish their industry on a sound foundation, in which the claims of miners, owners, and consumers will be treated with fairness and equity. It is to be hoped that the trade unions will henceforth break with the principles and tactics of the Syndicalists and other extremists, and thereby cease to be the modern representatives of the wicked husbandmen in the parable. The Syndicalists' first aim is to render all industries which are in the hands of individual employers or companies unprofitable, and the means they employ towards this end is to insist on a universal limitation of output, to treat all business contracts as scraps of paper when it suits their interest, to encourage such practices as boycott and sabotage, and, above all, to enforce the direct or the general strike. By means of the general strike, Syndicalism hopes to attain all its industrial and political aims. It hopes to attain its industrial aims—that is, to increase wages, to reduce hours, and especially to expropriate the owners of mines and all other means of production and transport, and to work these industries for their own exclusive benefit. Here we have the wicked husbandmen of the parable, saying, "Here is the heir; come, let us kill him, and take his inheritance."

By the same means—that is, by the general strike—they hope to achieve all their political aims and to dictate alike the home and foreign policy of the country. In fact, they seek to paralyse all true government, and to set the industrial Union with its rules and customs in the supreme place. Thus the law of the nation at large

is to be stripped of all authority and the sovereignty of the State overthrown. Class warfare is to be encouraged to the utmost, and all schemes of conciliation and reform, of profit-sharing and joint control by capital and labour of the various industries are to be utterly crushed, and a condition of anarchy to be introduced, out of which they cherish the vain and irrational hope that some better industrial system will of itself be born. These doctrines are being taught in England to-day. Their authors are criminals of a worse type than those imprisoned on Dartmoor; but the Government has been blind to the propaganda of these irrational fanatics and fostered this revolutionary movement by the cowardice, the opportunism, and the ignorance of economic questions it has exhibited in several great crises through which the country has passed from the date of the Trade Disputes Act in 1906 down to the present day. Should the Governments of the future yield to such hare-brained theories, the hour of England's doom is not far off, and the Great Avenger of all wrong-doing will speedily take away both our place and nation.

XV.

ORIGEN.

"Of whom the world was not worthy."—Heb. xi. 38.

MY subject this afternoon is the Christian Scholar, and, naturally, as the typical scholar of the Early Church I have chosen Origen. Origen, or to give him his full name, Origen Adamantius, was probably born at Alexandria in the year 185. His father was a Greek named Leonides; his mother was possibly of Jewish descent. Leonides had his son carefully educated in the ordinary subjects of instruction in the schools of Alexandria, and especially in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. In the course of his education Leonides was both perplexed and astonished at the boy's strong intelligence and piercing insight; he was great from the cradle onwards, and his transmitted works exhibit an amazing range of intellectual activity; for he was the first great scholar of the Christian Church, its first great preacher, its first great commentator, its first great devotional writer, and its first great theologian. Indeed, before Origen's time the Church had no definite system of theology. He was the founder of a theology which was brought to perfection in the

fourth and fifth centuries—a theology which, though still bearing the mark of his genius, disowned under obscurantist influences its author in the sixth.

In dealing, therefore, with such a great man, the greatest amongst the Fathers of the Early Church, it is obvious that only certain aspects of the subject can be touched upon, and these only in the most superficial way.

Whatever else may be omitted we cannot omit a short account of Origen's life, as this furnishes the best key to understanding the man and his writings.

When Origen reached the age of seventeen a fierce persecution of the Church burst out in Alexandria, and Origen's father, Leonides, was thrown into prison. The enthusiastic youth sought to stand by his father's side and witness for the truth by his death, and was only prevented from doing so by a homely device of his mother. Debarred from sharing in his father's approaching martyrdom, he addressed a letter to him in prison—a letter still extant in the time of Eusebius—in which he besought his father to allow no anxiety for his family to weaken his resolve. And so Leonides suffered martyrdom, his property was confiscated, and on the youthful shoulders of Origen fell the task of supporting his mother and his six younger brothers. His attainments in the field of knowledge were already so great at the age of eighteen, that he was asked to be the head of the Christian school in Alexandria, and his appointment was formally confirmed shortly afterwards by Demetrius the bishop.

The appointment of a layman to the headship of the theological school or college of Alexandria is an illustration of the freedom enjoyed in this respect by the Early Church—a freedom which it is to be hoped we shall in many matters recover.

In these early years, like many another enthusiast, he flung himself into asceticism. This was the time of his bondage to the letter of Scripture, and so he resolved to carry out absolutely and literally the precept of Christ, "Get you no gold nor silver in your purses: . . . neither two coats, nor shoes." Accordingly he sold all his MSS. for an annuity of six obols a day, wore only a single robe, discarded shoes and sandals, slept on the bare ground, and, owing to a still more grievous misinterpretation of Christ's words, went so far as to mutilate himself that he might escape the lusts of the flesh and work henceforth untrammelled and outside the range of temptations of the flesh. This act of self-mutilation, which was practised by the devotees of certain heathen religions, was against the civil law, and against the right instincts of the Early Church, which afterwards found expression in a Canon of the Council of Nicæa. In after years Origen bitterly regretted this act as due to an utter misconception of the teaching of Christ.

A martyr's son, Origen breathed a martyr's spirit into his pupils, and some of them at least perished as such. It is marvellous how he escaped the same fate during the early persecutions; for he visited the faithful in prison, and acted as their advocate before the heathen tribunals.

For over twelve years Origen carried on successfully his studies and lectures. This was a most productive period ; for during it his great textual work on the Old Testament, the *Hexapla*, was begun. The *Hexapla* consisted of the Hebrew text and five Greek versions all arranged in parallel columns. This was the first great achievement of Christian erudition, but unhappily it was for the most part destroyed during the Arab invasion of Egypt. But even the surviving fragments of this great work are of priceless value to scholars, and these happily have been splendidly edited by Field, an able English scholar, in his monumental work on the *Hexapla*.

During this period Origen attended the lectures of Ammonius Saccas the philosopher, and studied the works of Plato, Numenius, the Stoics, and Pythagoreans. When taken to task for so doing, he justified his action by maintaining that he could not help his non-Christian hearers unless he understood their opinions. This seems a very obvious truth, and yet it is only within the last generation that the great Missionary Societies have adopted this principle in evangelising the non-Christian world, though they have only in part adopted it as yet. Origen vindicated the claim of Gentile philosophy as being the ripest fruit of man's natural powers, and not of man's corruption as the Latin father, Tertullian, asserted.

In 215 a civil outbreak of unusual violence drove Origen from Alexandria. Taking refuge in Palestine he settled in Cæsarea, where at the request of the Bishops

of Cæsarea and Jerusalem he, though a layman, preached at the public services of the Church. But when his own Bishop, Demetrius, heard thereof, he recalled him at once to Alexandria, and condemned his conduct therein as unprecedented. But to this charge the two Palestinian Bishops rejoined that Origen's conduct was far from being unprecedented; for that, wheresoever laymen were found qualified to benefit the brethren, they were exhorted by the bishops to address the people, and to this statement they attached a list of such occasions (Eus., *Hist.* vi. 19).

On his return to Alexandria, Origen published his first works on the Bible at the age of thirty-eight. A rich layman whom he had converted from Gnosticism, named Ambrose, supplied him with seven shorthand writers and as many scribes to copy out what they had taken down. His literary activity was amazing. The greatest of his many works at this period were his treatise on *First Principles* and his *Commentary on St. John*. The first work, as Westcott writes, made an epoch in Christian speculation, as the latter made an epoch in Christian interpretation. Through it Origen showed himself to be the master thinker of the Early Church and fashioned its thought. It is true he could not have been what he was but for the work of his predecessors, Justin, Pantænus, Clement; but their systems in comparison with his are but as the tentative efforts of the youth beside the finished work of the matured and master mind. Origen, moreover, was the most influential of all the theologians of the Early

Church with the exception of Augustine. But, whereas every advance in thought and theology serves to render untenable leading doctrines in the theology of St. Augustine—such theories as that God elected men to eternal life or eternal damnation independently of their own conduct, that practically there was no such thing as free will, that man had entirely lost the image of God by the fall of Adam, that unbaptized infants were excluded eternally from heaven, and that all who had died unsaved should suffer without hope for everlasting —the same advancing thought of Christendom tends to reaffirm the main positions of Origen on these very questions. St. Augustine, in fact, is in many respects the master mind of the dark ages of the Church and of kindred obscurantist tendencies of the Church in the present, but Origen is the forerunner of the nobler theology of the times that have been and the times that are yet to be.

As might have been anticipated, the publication of his book on *First Principles* and other like works brought about a divergence between Origen and Demetrius, the Bishop of Alexandria, and it became clear to Origen that his work must henceforth lie elsewhere, unless he was prepared to bow to the dictates of an imperious, self-opinionated, and narrow-minded ecclesiastic, who had neither the intellect, learning, nor temperament to appreciate the great genius he had as his subordinate. Origen proceeded accordingly to consult his old friends the Bishops of Cæsarea and Jerusalem, who without more ado jointly ordained him a presbyter at the age

of forty-five. This action of Origen was apparently construed by Demetrius as a direct challenge of his authority, and occasioned a storm of persecution, which never abated throughout the rest of Origen's life, and pursued him for centuries after his death. Demetrius convened a Synod composed of bishops and a few presbyters, which ordered Origen to leave Alexandria. But this did not satisfy Demetrius, who forthwith convened another Synod composed of bishops only, and many of them newly-created suffragans. By means of this packed Synod he secured Origen's removal from the priesthood, against the inclination of the leading priests in Alexandria. With this sentence of the Alexandrian Synod, the Church of Rome, which has always been more or less ignorant or obscurantist, concurred; but this most unjust sentence was treated with absolute indifference by the Bishops of Palestine, Phœnicia, Arabia, and Southern Greece, and even in Alexandria it was accepted with considerable reservations; for Dionysius, who became Bishop of Alexandria in 248 and was known in his own days as "the Great Bishop of Alexandria," and designated later by Athanasius as "the teacher of the Catholic Church," was a pupil of Origen's and steadfastly maintained communion with him and wrote in praise of him after his death.

We have here arrived at a new era in Origen's life. Through unlooked-for crises and unforeseen and unknown ways he was being taught deeper conceptions of Christian sacrifice. He had been eager in his earlier years to give up his body to be burned, he had literally

destroyed within him what he regarded as an offending member, he had given all his goods to feed the poor, and now a fresh command bids him go forth in banishment and obloquy to serve God elsewhere.

And so Origen went forth from home and country to Cæsarea, and there established a school which soon rivalled that of Alexandria. There he laboured for more than twenty years, building up the Church and attracting some of the noblest spirits of the time to join in its service.

Naturally a character which combined the highest intellectual gifts with the most profound disinterestedness and purity of life wielded an enormous personal influence. Of this influence I will mention a few typical examples. By a series of apparent accidents a brilliant youth of noble birth, on his way to the University of Berytus to study Roman law, falls in with Origen, and forthwith forsakes alike country, kindred, and all worldly prospects to study at the feet of Origen—to be known for all after-time as Gregory Thaumaturgus—one of the most notable missionary bishops of the Early Church. A Governor of a Roman province, falling into spiritual difficulties, summons Origen and consults him on matters of his soul; the Emperor Philip carries on a correspondence with him; the Empress Julia Mammæa invites him to Antioch, and furnishes this single-minded servant of God with an imperial guard of honour. The Churches of Achaia and Arabia, when differences arose between them which threatened a complete breach of intercourse, lay before him their

grounds for disunion, accept his award, and renew the bonds of Christian fellowship.

This period of activity lasted to the Decian persecution in 250, when his great friend, the Bishop of Cæsarea, was cast into prison and died there, a Confessor of the Faith. Origen himself too was thrown into prison, his neck bound in an iron collar, his limbs weighed down with chains, and finally he was torn on the rack for several days in succession. Bleeding and broken as he was, his constancy baffled all the cruel ingenuities of his persecutors, and though now over sixty-six years old he emerged from the trial, broken in body but triumphant in spirit, and was set free a year later. But the severities he had undergone had shattered beyond recovery a frame already enfeebled by labour and years, and he died in 253 in Cæsarea.

As Origen covered the whole field of theology we must limit ourselves to the consideration of two points out of the host of those to which he has made permanent contributions. These two are his theory of Biblical interpretation and his teaching on the future life. In these we shall see at once his greatness and his limitations. Origen, like most of his Christian contemporaries, held fast to the doctrine of verbal and literal inspiration inherited from the Jews, according to which every jot and tittle had its significance. At the same time Origen could not but acknowledge the moral and historical difficulties that were inherent in many passages of the Old Testament. These difficulties were emphasised by powerful schools of Christian specula-

tion, by the Gnostics and Greek philosophers, and these difficulties could not be evaded by any honest scholar and thinker such as Origen. These objectors urged that the God of the Old Testament could neither be good nor just nor loving, seeing that He pronounces a blessing on the treachery of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite; that He instructed Samuel how to deceive Saul when He sent Samuel secretly to anoint David king; that He ordered the cruel wars of the Jews, and inspired the unparalleled curses of the Imprecatory Psalms. Against a few passages of the New Testament similar objections were levelled. The result of such objections was an admission on Origen's part that in their literal sense such passages were not true. They were, he contended, only the rough and outer husk which repelled the ignorant and unworthy reader but stimulated the faithful to more eager study of the true meaning; the letter often killed: it was only the external garb, often squalid and torn, but the King's daughter was nevertheless all glorious within.

There was, in fact, no other course open for an honest mind. Verbal inspiration required the Church to accept every word as proceeding from the mouth of God, and yet the inner voice of God in man's heart—in other words, the enlightened conscience—required him to say that such things could not be true of a loving and just God in their literal sense. Hence originated Origen's theory of a threefold sense in the Scriptures—the literal, the moral, and the spiritual or mystic. Of these the literal was sometimes inadmissible; and

occasionally also the moral; but the true and deepest significance was to be found always in the spiritual or mystic. This last sense he arrived at through treating the text as an allegory. This method was not new: in fact it was traditional in Egypt. Philo the Jew, and the Rabbinic schools two centuries earlier, had allegorised the Old Testament, and this method had been adopted one hundred years before Origen's time by the Christian writer Barnabas. By this means Origen saved the Old Testament and vindicated its possession as the rightful heritage of the Christian Church, and all subsequent times are under infinite obligations to him in this respect, though the Church has now come to recognise that his methods of interpretation are untenable. For the Church now holds that the Bible is the history of the divine education of the human race. In the course of this education man rises gradually through many misapprehensions to a truer knowledge of God, and customs and deeds that were permissible at an earlier stage of the education become wholly inadmissible at a later. God's message to man is conditioned by the medium through which it is given: the character of the recipients of God's inspiration affects this inspiration; the limitations of the pupil define the limits of his capacity for divine enlightenment. But this solution of the problem was impossible at the time; for the doctrine of the gradual development of the human race was unknown to Origen, and has only been accepted in modern times, and that only by the more enlightened branches of the Christian Church.

The last subject that we can consider is Origen's teaching on the future life.

Since God made man in His own image, it is only in goodness that men can find blessedness and peace—not in happiness, still less in pleasure can he reach the full satisfaction of that restless love that God has implanted in his soul. But the image is only in an inchoate condition. Only through discipline can the lineaments of the divine image be developed, and the likeness will not be perfected till the final consummation of all things. Every moment the individual is acting or being acted upon: he is either enriching or impoverishing the spiritual and moral forces of the world, wherewith God is slowly but irresistibly fulfilling His purposes of redemption. The very difficulties of life are for the faithful opportunities for heroic enterprise or loving service; all things, however contrary, work together for good to them that love God and not themselves; its obstacles are but as incentives to additional and nobler efforts—veritable occasions for making further progress.

But as a scene of such probation and discipline, Origen admits that this world very often fails; it does not always work amendment. Hence he concludes that other worlds of penal purification and moral advancement await us. Herein Origen's conception of redemption is of the most comprehensive character imaginable; all rational beings[1] throughout the universe, human, angelic, or evil, will share in it, and

[1] *De Princip.* i. 6. 3 (Lommatzsch, xxi. 110).

advance through chastisement. All future retribution will answer exactly to the condition of the individual being, and be administered with a view to his amendment. In every case the utmost farthing will be required, and just thereby the soul will be enabled to attain final deliverance and peace. None will, Origen hopes, continue obdurate. The Lord will be as a refiner's fire, and through that fire we shall all pass, and therein each man's work shall be tried of what sort it is. Even an Isaiah and a St. Paul shall be submitted to this scrutiny, but in theirs and such-like cases the old word of prophecy shall stand fast: "Though thou passest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee" (Isa. xliii. 2). But as for sinners, says Origen, and here that unique saint and hero of the Christian foretime, fit to stand by an Isaiah, a St. John, or a St. Paul, says characteristically—but as for sinners "such as I am" [1] they must be purged with another fire—through the severe discipline which begun here will last till Christ has redeemed all souls.[2]

Slowly but certainly the blessed transformation will be wrought, the dross and evil be purged away. Perhaps not till age has followed on age, and world has succeeded world, will the consummation be reached. But it will be reached by all, Origen declares, not through the ignoring or condoning of a single evil or sin, but through

[1] "Si vero similis mei peccator sit." *Hom. iii.* on Psalm xxxvii. (Lommatzsch, xii. 182).

[2] *De Princip.* iii. 5. 7 (Lommatzsch, xxi. 354 seq.)

the soul's deliverance from them, by the Spirit of Christ in this discipline of the ages.

At last the tale of God's children will be complete, and they all shall be one, even as Christ and the Father are one, and God shall be all in all.

Such was the high hope entertained for humanity and all rational beings by Origen, one of the greatest and humblest of men, at once scholar and theologian, genius and saint, humanist and servant of God.

XVI.

FORGIVENESS—I.[1]

"The Lord is slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and that will by no means clear the guilty."—NUM. xiv. 18.

IT is a strange paradox that whereas the Old Testament prophets could believe in God's willingness to forgive without money and without price, Christians from the close of the New Testament onward have shown a strange incapacity for such a belief, and have in fact devised all manner of theories—some of them simply appalling from the standpoint of justice and reasonableness—to account for the fact that God can

[1] As these four sermons on Forgiveness were preached in 1915 and are in themselves a recast of five sermons on the same subject, which I published in 1887 after nearly two years' study of the Doctrine of the Atonement, they have not been influenced by works on this subject of a later date. Here and there, it is true, details have been changed and whole sections omitted, but my main thesis as to the meaning of forgiveness and the conditions on which it is granted and obtained remains essentially the same. I have remarked that the definition of forgiveness, at which I ultimately arrived, has been adopted or else arrived at independently by some later writers.

I wish here to express my agreement with Dr. Rashdall in his most learned and thoughtful work, *The Idea of the Atonement in Christian Theology*, 1919, especially on pp. 24–28. I wish that it had been written before 1915.

and does forgive the repentant sinner. This belief, that God cannot freely forgive man on his repentance, has certainly been the prevailing opinion of the Church down to recent times, although it was not so held by the writers of the Old Testament. On the other hand, whereas the Old Testament Jew did not as a rule regard forgiveness of his neighbour as a necessary part of his religion, the Christian has been taught from the outset by Christ and His apostles that, unless a man forgive his neighbour, he cannot be forgiven of God.

During the first ten centuries of the Christian era, an extraordinary theory was propounded by most of the leading Fathers of the Church in regard to man's redemption.

Thus Irenæus, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, Gregory the Great, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Peter Lombard agree in interpreting the death of Christ as a ransom paid by God to Satan, who was regarded as the legitimate lord and master of fallen humanity, and who could be induced to make surrender of his rights only on condition of receiving the life of Christ as an equivalent. Traces and indeed statements of higher conceptions are found—especially in the early Greek Fathers—but it was not till the eleventh century that a nobler theory was put forward by Anselm which successfully ousted the former monstrous conception. In his great work, *Cur Deus Homo*, Anselm rejects categorically the theory of a ransom to Satan. There is no just ground, he argues, for maintaining that God was under any obligation to

Satan. Christ's atonement concerned not Satan but God. Man by his sin had broken the divine law; God's honour was therefore outraged; and since sin against an infinite God incurs infinite guilt, such guilt could only be atoned by an infinite satisfaction. Hence the death of Christ, the God-Man, was necessary.

In both these schemes we have a doctrine of substitution, and Christ was regarded as a Divine scapegoat offered, according to the earlier Fathers, to Satan, to redeem fallen humanity from his power, and in Anselm, Grotius, and later theologians to satisfy the claims of the outraged honour or law of God. Anselm's theory was accepted and recast by Calvin. To Calvin it was not, as with Anselm, simply a question of God's honour, which could not be satisfied without the obedience He required, but it was a question of God's holiness, which, being necessarily in eternal conflict with sin, demanded of necessity a punishment commensurate with the sin. This punishment, which was essentially of a penal character, was undergone by Christ as man's substitute, and thus were met the claims of God's justice, for to Calvin retributive justice was of the essence of Deity. By His death Christ satisfied the claims of justice, and at the same time made it possible for God to forgive man.

This theory of Calvin was next modified by Grotius, whose views were widely accepted, but which do not call for treatment here, since they agree with those of Anselm and Calvin in finding the atoning quality of Christ's redemption in the pain of His sufferings *con-*

sidered as pain, and in conceiving *fear* and not *love* as the motive on which they rely.

These doctrines of vicarious punishment have been rejected by the chief theologians of modern times. Their speculations are naturally of a more ethical and spiritual character. I can only mention three of the chief modern writers on this question—M'Leod Campbell, Moberly, and Ritschl. These all agree in holding that the difficulty in the way of God's forgiving man lies not in God but in man. God is infinitely willing to forgive, if man only truly and perfectly repent. Campbell is concerned mainly with the Atonement as it affects the individual. But such perfect repentance both Campbell and Moberly maintain is not possible for man in and by himself. Only the sinless Christ can adequately apprehend the full heinousness and significance of sin, and by identifying Himself with suffering humanity can manifest the true attitude which man, if he would be forgiven, must adopt towards sin. Perfect repentance, then, is the indispensable condition for the obtaining of God's forgiveness. But how the benefit of Christ's repentance is to be transferred to others is not explained by Campbell otherwise than that, under the influence of Christ's example, man recognises his sin, and, by identifying himself with Christ's repentance and supreme condemnation of sin, enters into the Divine forgiveness, and so is spiritually transformed.

But the explanation is here halting, and so Campbell has been charged—and not without justice—

with substituting for the older doctrine of vicarious punishment the still more difficult one of vicarious repentance.

While therefore it must be admitted that Campbell has failed to explain the efficacy of Christ's repentance for others, the service which he rendered in maintaining that the essential condition of forgiveness is repentance must be unconditionally acknowledged.

Moberly, as we have said, rightly concurs with Campbell in maintaining that repentance is the indispensable condition of Divine forgiveness. Like Campbell also he holds that such perfect repentance is not possible for man, but only for the God-man. But he parts with Campbell in explaining the efficacy of Christ's repentance for others. This efficacy is operative, he maintains, only in case there is a real identity between the sinner and Christ, for "in the Spirit Christ enters into humanity and becomes the basis of its higher life." [1] This identity is secured by the gradual realisation within us subjectively of the Christ, who was manifested objectively in Galilee and on the Cross; and this process goes onward till, in the Pauline language, Christ is formed within us.

If now we ask where and how this spiritual union is effected, Moberly replies—in the Church with its sacramental system, in the disciples of Christ who have become verily and indeed Christian by sharing in Christ's spirit.

Moberly's theory marks an important advance over

[1] Hastings' *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, v. 649.

that of Campbell in that he recognises that the salvation of the individual is realised in connection with the body of the faithful, whereas Campbell ignores the relation of the individual to the community of which he is a member.

This social or corporate side is still more strikingly emphasised in Ritschl. According to this theologian "the purpose of God is not primarily the salvation of individuals as such, but their union in the redeemed society of the Kingdom of God." [1] Inasmuch as Christ through His trust in God and love for man was enabled to overcome obstacles otherwise insuperable, He has thereby become the pledge of a like victory for those who, through Him, realise the like trust and love. Only through such a life of trust in God and service of men, already exemplified perfectly in that of Christ, which are not two different things but only two aspects of one and the same experience, can His followers receive Divine forgiveness, and the Kingdom of God be established among men.

From this very brief and most imperfect sketch of some of the main stages through which human thought regarding Divine forgiveness has passed from the times of the Fathers to the present, it is clear that vast progress has been made, unethical elements have been steadily discarded, and men's conceptions of Divine forgiveness have become reasonable and spiritual.

Now I propose in this and the following three sermons to deal with some practical aspects of God's forgiveness

[1] *Op. cit.* v. 649.

of man and man's forgiveness of his neighbour, and to draw the evidence on which my conclusions are based from the Old and New Testaments and the Jewish books that were written between these Testaments.

Now first of all we have seen that, throughout most of the centuries since the Christian era, Christian writers have conceived the Divine forgiveness of sin as a thing of such transcendent difficulty, that it all but baffled even God to surmount it. And multitudes of Christians even at the present day are unable to believe in a forgiving God. They will only believe that God forgives when His justice or vengeance have been satisfied to the full; man, they say, has incurred an infinite debt, and God absolutely cannot forgive till Christ's death has discharged the obligation to the last farthing. In short, God, according to this view, never forgives a debt until it is paid in full.

This and all analogous conceptions of Divine forgiveness are in direct conflict with the highest teaching of both the Old and New Testaments. The prevailing spirit of revelation is one that manifests God's infinite willingness to forgive unto the uttermost all that come unto Him for forgiveness. Thus the Psalmist declares:

> "The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion;
> Slow to anger, and of great mercy" (Ps. cxlv. 8).

And the prophet:

> "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters,
> And he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat;
> Yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Isa. lv. 1).

Or again :

> " As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; . . . turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel" (Ezek. xxxiii. 11).

Or again :

> " Though your sins be as scarlet,
> They shall be as white as snow;
> Though they be red like crimson,
> They shall be as wool" (Isa. i. 18).

Thus in the Old Testament God's forgiveness is fully bestowed without money and without price. And in the New Testament the same truth is enforced in manifold ways. It is set forth in the clearest terms in our Lord's own teaching: alike in the Sermon on the Mount and in the most wonderful and touching of all His parables —that of the Prodigal Son. St. Paul is most careful to emphasise the fact that it is not God that has to be reconciled to man, but man that has to be reconciled to God; and agreeably therewith the Fourth Evangelist declares, " God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son " to redeem it; while the New Testament in its closing verses issues the world-wide invitation :

> " And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come.
> And let him that heareth say, Come.
> And let him that is athirst come.
> Whosoever willeth, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. xxii. 17).

From such passages, which might be multiplied a hundredfold, we conclude, therefore, that all theories of Divine

forgiveness, which insist that a certain satisfaction must be made to God's justice or honour before God is in a position to forgive man, are not derived from the true spirit of the Bible but from a source wholly alien to it — a spirit which led the translators of the Authorised Version on dogmatic grounds to mistranslate Eph. iv. 32, and render it "even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you," whereas they ought to have translated "even as God in Christ hath forgiven[1] you." The phrase, "for Christ's sake,"[2] is not found in this connection[3] in the New Testament. God reveals Himself in Christ: God in Christ forgives and redeems man. Christ's life and sacrifice is not the cause of God's forgiveness but the supreme manifestation of God's forgivingness, and in a certain sense we shall see later that God has forgiven man from the foundation of the world.

We must now attempt to discover what God's forgiveness of man means, and wherein it consists, but this we cannot do unless we give good heed to the following facts:

1. No satisfaction can undo the sin once done. The evil act that has been perpetrated abides unmovable for ever; forgiveness cannot alter the sinful past. This past, as a fact, is as unmovable as my own being:

[1] This seems to be the right translation of the Greek aorist in this passage. It very often bears this meaning. See Moulton's *Gram.* i. 135–140.

[2] This wrong translation did not, so far as I can discover, arise before the sixteenth century. It seems due to some one or other of the unethical theories of the Atonement, which maintained that, before God can forgive man, full satisfaction must be made to divine justice.

[3] For a closely related phrase see 1 John ii. 12.

no atonement can render it undone. Even Omnipotence cannot make what once has been not to have been.

2. The guilt, the moral wrongness of sin, is likewise unalterable; nothing can relieve it, by a single shade, of God's reprobation; whatever enormity belonged to it at the hour of its commission cleaves inexorably to it for ever.

3. The self-propagating power of sin never dies save with the sin itself. No expiation can affect the corrupting energy of sin; for this is its essential nature, and cannot be severed from it even by the Almighty.

But though the corrupting energy of sin cannot be destroyed so long as sin exists, yet the cause may be destroyed, the sin itself, and herein we have the sole, and yet most blessed, hope for sinful man. The fact that sin has been committed is unalterable; the exact measure of its inherent guilt may never be diminished, but the principle of evil, the source alike of the evil act, the guilt, and the evil energy, may itself be destroyed; and so, instead of love of evil, there can be willing devotion to goodness and truth; instead of remoteness from God, there can be oneness of life with Him.

Our next inquiry is to discover if forgiveness obliterates and destroys the consequences of sin—in other words, *does forgiveness deliver man from the penalties of sin, physical, moral, and spiritual?*

Revelation declares in no uncertain note that forgiveness does not necessarily carry with it remission of the penalty of sin. God forgives, though He may at the same time exact the penalty of the transgression. In

David's case we have an illustration of this general law—forgiveness was announced and punishment foretold in the same sentence: "Thy sin is put away; nevertheless, the child that is born unto thee shall surely die." Thus forgiveness is by no means synonymous with impunity; man is forgiven and loosed from his sin. Notwithstanding, he suffers from its painful results. Thus it has ever been in all ages of the world; the penitent is forgiven, and yet is visited with the unfailing nemesis of his sin. So it was with Lot, so with Abraham, so with Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Hezekiah. We cannot, my brethren, too early rid ourselves of the immoral superstition that a man may sin with impunity, that he may break the laws of God, and not suffer the inevitable penalty. Christ has not come to sever this connection of wrong-doing and suffering, of sin and death; for the one is the necessary wage of the other. Nor may we evade the difficulty by the sophism that Christ has paid the penalty; for how were it equitable that justice should execute itself on One who never wronged it in thought or deed? On this, however, we shall touch again.

Our own experience, too, gives clear witness to this truth. Do we not see every day that, while the sins of the faithful are forgiven, yet every act of unfaithfulness on their part is attended with its fitting retribution —falsehood with the penalty of distrust, dishonesty with loss of character, intemperance with disease of body and the reprobation of men? The passionate tempers of the saint cause not less but greater evil

than the outbursts of the sinner; the meanness, injustice, and petty jealousies of the child of God evoke our aversion and indignation and contempt as much, or rather, immeasurably more, than when they appear in the wilful prodigal. Yes, God is ever forgiving; yet each sin leaves its mark; our moral character has suffered declension; our thought and desires take a lower tone; we still carry with us the intrinsic evil of a mind that has been corrupted and the external curse that is thereby entailed. Our influence for good is weakened; we can do less than we could otherwise have done, because of our past unworthiness; we are more open to temptation, more given to suspicion and the vices of a mind diseased. Yes, God forgives our sins, and yet they are with us in their effects or results. Divine forgiveness, then, is not a countermanding of the appointed sufferings of guilt; not a treatment of moral wrong as if it were moral right.

One obvious reason why God's forgiveness of our sins does not convey with it impunity from their consequences is that this would entail a never-ending series of interpositions, which would put an end to all certainty of conduct. No longer would the truth hold, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap"; for then one might sow lust and greed, and lying and meanness, and reap, by repentance, the harvest of a holy life; might, in fact, serve the Evil One with all his heart during his life, and at the eleventh hour become one of the most acceptable and loud-voiced children of the Kingdom. If such were the case, men would have good reason to

suspect the righteousness and equity of the God who so ordained.

But these speculations are wholly idle; for as surely as God is righteousness and holiness, so surely sin is death, so surely must every sin be visited with righteous punishment. Even the Almighty cannot sever the connection of transgression and sorrow, of sin and death. For the laws of righteousness are not the creation of God's will; God does not love right and good, because it is the thing that He has ordered, but orders and loves it, because it is right and good; and He could no more make it otherwise than identify the crooked and the straight; for righteousness, we repeat, is not the creation of God's will, but the essential expression of His nature.

Hence, then, these laws are as eternal and immutable as God Himself. They are, moreover, self-executing; they exact, and never cease exacting, the precise measure of penalty incurred, visible and invisible, to the last jot and tittle.

Sin is death, holiness is life. The full punishment of sin is not indeed the work of a moment; there is the long train of moral and physical penalty which attends so long as its cause exists. Moreover, spiritual darkness and moral death are simultaneous with the act of transgression; even the lightning loiters in contrast with the speed of spiritual retribution. Sin is death: thus sin always ensures its own punishment—the beginning of moral death which must issue in utter perdition unless it be destroyed. Spiritual laws are self-executing, but human laws require the agency of

man to enforce them, and accordingly many crimes escape punishment in this world. Misled by this analogy of human law, we at times imagine that we have a long array of our sins in the past still unpunished, still waiting to be avenged. But this is an entire misconception, arising from a confusion of human and divine law. The divine law can never be evaded. No sin is left unpunished for a moment. "The spiritual law is never defrauded; God has no outstanding accounts, no unsettled claims." The most perfect justice is enforced in the case of every transgressor. Moral death begins and grows deeper and more complete with the duration and measure of the sin.

There is only one way of escaping the doom of the sinful soul. If sin be expelled from the soul, the death which issues solely from it is prevented. This is the only salvation for man—salvation from sin itself, not from its consequences, either here or hereafter. There are saints that shall enter the kingdom of heaven halt and maimed, thus carrying with them the fruits of their sin into the presence of the Eternal; and which of us shall not, my brethren? God's forgiveness does not alter our past, nor save us from the consequences of that past, but kills outright within us the evil that is present. By the sacrifice of Christ, by Incarnate Crucified Love, God would manifest His love and His forgivingness and destroy the root of evil in the heart of man, and kindle therein the love of holiness, the resolute willing choice of goodness and of God. Thus God's mercy in Christ withdraws not indeed the criminal

from punishment, but destroys in his soul the evil that entails the punishment. There is accordingly no conflict between divine mercy and divine justice, which are really two sides of one and the same attribute of God, *i.e.* His love. The spheres of these two attributes of God we may, for the sake of clearness, represent to ourselves as separate. Justice punishes sin, and must punish sin so long as it exists. The claim of justice is based solely on the presence of sin in the soul, and this claim is satisfied to the uttermost. But, if sin is expelled, this claim of necessity ceases. Mercy interposes, not indeed to defraud justice, but to destroy sin; it delivers from sin itself, and so dispenses with the need of punishment. Thus sin is slain, and man is saved. And so, my brethren, if we regard sin aright, it is not the thought of the penalty that will agonise our hearts, but of our severance from truth and purity and holiness, of our estrangement from our Father in heaven. And so we shall esteem the law that links sorrow and sin to be holy and divine, and accept it with a chastened gladness, though it bring us pain; for though it try us by fire, it will help to deliver us from the sin that estranges us from our God. Our cry, then, for forgiveness, the cry of Christendom for salvation, will thus be the true expression of genuine sorrow for sin, and not the petition of a terrified selfishness.

XVII.

FORGIVENESS—II.

"Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."—MATT. vi 12.

WE are now in a position to examine the grounds on which it has been said that satisfaction must be made before God can grant forgiveness.

1. The first ground put forward is, that the law of God has been dishonoured by disobedience, and its authority trampled under foot of men, and that satisfaction is therefore due to eternal justice. But is it true that a law, whether human or divine, can be dishonoured, or its authority weakened, by disobedience pure and simple? for *law as a matter of necessity contemplates disobedience*. "The law was not made for a righteous man," and is honoured to the uttermost when it is maintained in all its force, in spite of resistance. A law, on the other hand, is dishonoured when its terms and provisions are evaded directly or indirectly; when it is found unequal to the occasion, and its penalties prove inadequate. But the justice of God can never be dishonoured, as no transgressor against it can or does escape. In each instance the divine penalty,

perfectly righteous and perfectly adequate, is carried out without exception and without fail. Hence the idea of reparation or satisfaction is wholly irrelevant here. The justice of God can neither be dishonoured or defrauded; every man is rewarded according to his works, and when man sins, spiritual death sets in inevitably. Even when the divine life has triumphed within us over the life of sin, so long as any sin exists within us, and in the exact measure in which it exists, we are conscious how profoundly moral death checks and deadens the aspirations and powers of the higher life.

As we have said in the preceding sermon, we may represent to ourselves God's grace and justice moving in different spheres. God of His mercy destroys sin in the soul of man, without, however, disregarding a single claim of justice. So far as sin still exists in the surrendered soul, so far does justice maintain its claim and exact its penalty. Thus, while grace is triumphant, justice is maintained in its completest integrity.

2. As a second ground on which the necessity of satisfaction has been based, it is declared that the moral government of the universe would be endangered if sin were simply pardoned without such an expiation as was made by Christ on the Cross. This scheme was originated by men versed in Roman law, and prevails largely in certain parts of Christendom. But though framed by lawyers, it is not remarkable for its justice; for while the law is vindicated, not because of the sin itself, but as a mere deterrent to others, the further

fiction is introduced of visiting the penalty incurred, not on the actual transgressor, but on the head of the sinless. We have just seen, however, that God's laws always vindicate themselves to the veriest jot and tittle, and so stand in no need of a fancied satisfaction. But, if there is no room for the popular doctrine of Satisfaction in regard to God's justice and moral government, what is there left for it to achieve ? Whom can it affect ?

3. Shall we suppose that there is a deep sense of provocation and righteous anger in God's mind against sin, and that this is appeased by the sufferings and death of Christ ? So, indeed, it has been said. The rejoinder, however, is a matter of no difficulty. Part of this theory is true, and part false. God's wrath against sin is a profound truth ; but that this wrath can be altered so long as its cause, sin, exists, is a purely pagan falsehood. God's wrath against sin is unalterable ; its intensity is beyond exaggeration. Only the All-Holy can comprehend the exceeding sinfulness of sin ; it is sin alone throughout the wide universe that God hates eternally, hates inexorably, hates with a perfect hatred. And this righteous displeasure of God can never be appeased, never be altered ; for it springs from the essential righteousness of God, and is the implacable foe of all sin. But, if the sin that has place within the soul were destroyed, the cause of the divine anger would be removed ; but while sin remains, no sacrifice, however priceless in itself, could change or modify God's wrath against it. God always sees sin to be exactly what it is, and exactly where it is, and

nothing can alter this eternal fact. There is no make-believe in the case of the Divine Being. God's declaration against sin stands sure for ever: "It is the abominable thing that I hate."

We have now arrived at one of the causes of man's redemption. God hates sin; it is the ruin and destruction of the souls He has made and loves; therefore it must be destroyed. But herein we have only one side of the Divine Nature. God's love of man is no less profound than His hatred of sin; therefore man shall be saved. In the life and death of the Incarnate Son, in Calvary and the Cross, we have the infallible tokens of God's hatred of sin; and, in characters still more significant, the measure of His love to man. God has left nothing undone to destroy sin; nothing, absolutely nothing, in order to save man.

Thus Christ's coming in the flesh is the result of God's love to man, not the cause of it. And man's salvation could be achieved only in the destruction of sin; and this twofold end was accomplished on the Cross. It is only love could slay sin; it is only love could save the sinner; and thus, through the Cross, through the power of Incarnate Love, the death of sin is the life of man.

In last Sunday afternoon's sermon we began by drawing attention to the fact that, though in the highest thought of the Old Testament and throughout all the New, the doctrine of God's willingness to forgive man without money and without price was emphasised in the strongest terms, yet for nearly nineteen hundred

years Christians have shown a strange inability to believe this truth, and put forth all manner of theories to explain it. Next, we sought to determine what forgiveness meant, by showing what it did not mean, *i.e.* that no satisfaction could undo the sin once done; that the moral guilt remained unalterable; that sin's self-propagating power never died save with the sin itself; and that forgiveness did not carry with it the remission of sin's penalties — physical, moral, and spiritual.

What, then, is forgiveness, since it does not alter the fact of past sin or past guilt, nor yet carry with it the remission of the penalties of sin? Does it not seem as though forgiveness had been emptied of its significance and rendered weak and unavailing to succour the helplessness of man? Nay, my brethren, we can now at length understand what forgiveness is. Forgiveness is the removal of the alienation of our heart from God; for it is the unlikeness of our mind to His that separates us from Him. Forgiveness is the reopening of the channels of the river of life that stream in upon us from our God, and which our sins had closed; it is the blotting out of the dark clouds which our iniquities had raised, and that had shut us off from the vision of our Father in heaven; it is the endowing us with the power of making a new beginning in our spiritual life—a beginning indeed conditioned by our past, but not the thrall of it; it is the introduction of a new spring of life into the centre of our being, which, if faithfully cherished, spreads steadily out to its circumference till

we are wholly born again ; in short, to put the matter in the briefest form : *forgiveness is our restoration to communion with God—a communion from which our sins had exiled us.* And communion with God is life, and restoration to communion is restoration to divine life ; and thus forgiveness is restoration to our life in God. This life causes the death of sin by implanting the love of holiness ; self-will is renounced that God's will be enthroned in the heart ; and thus forgiveness slays sin. The converse also is true. Only in the measure in which we die to sin is God's forgiveness, our communion with Him, realised. There is no forgiveness of sin save through deliverance from it ; no loosing from sin save through death thereunto. Hence we pray in our incomparable Liturgy morning and evening : " Spare Thou them, O God, which confess their faults ; restore Thou them that are penitent."

Divine forgiveness, then, in its essence neither undoes the fact of sin nor remits its penalties, but restores the repentant soul to communion with its God.

This communion with God, if it is to be a real communion, must be ever growing in depth and fulness, and involves, therefore, a progressive deliverance from sin alike as regards God and as regards our neighbour. When we receive God's forgiveness it is not given merely for our momentary relief or deliverance, but that we may be inwardly transformed, and *the spirit of forgivingness* be implanted in our hearts. Forgiveness being a restoration to a living active communion with God, must necessarily manifest itself in our relations

with others, else it is not really experienced at all. This is the meaning of the great parable which represents the unforgiving debtor as rendering himself incapable of being forgiven at God's hands, because he refused to forgive his neighbour. He regarded forgiveness as a thing designed for his own personal ease and comfort and as the remission of so much outward penalty, and not as the transformation of his inward character by restoration to communion with God. Thus man is forgiven of God only in so far as his whole attitude is changed alike in regard to his neighbour and to God. We cannot sin against our brother and have communion with God. "If we say we have fellowship with God, and walk in darkness, we lie," writes St. John. Thus God's forgiveness of us is conditioned by our forgiveness of our neighbour and proceeds in the exact measure of that forgiveness. Our Lord never wearies of repeating this truth of divine forgiveness as forming one fact with human forgiveness. "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you."

In the parable of the Unforgiving Debtor, to which we have already referred, our Lord graphically represents our neighbour's sins against us under the figure of a hundred pence, and our sins against God under the figure of ten thousand talents. In other words, the immensity of the one and the insignificance of the other almost put them wholly out of relation, and yet our Lord makes the forgiveness of the debt of ten

thousand talents conditional on our forgiving our neighbour his debt of a hundred pence: if we exact the hundred pence, God requires of us the ten thousand talents. The unforgiving is ever the unforgiven.

We have hitherto spoken of forgiveness as though it bore one and the same meaning throughout the Bible. But this is not so. Forgiveness has undoubtedly two different meanings essentially related to each other and yet different, the one forming the initial stage and the other the completed grace; and since this holds true, whether we use the word in relation to God or in relation to man, it follows that, when we have discovered the two meanings of human forgiveness in relation to man, we have also discovered the two meanings of divine forgiveness in relation to man.

As we examine the Old Testament we discover that, though there are isolated admonitions to forgive an offender, as in Lev. xix. 17, 18, "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart: . . . but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," the scope of these admonitions is limited absolutely to Israelites or to such strangers as had taken upon themselves the yoke of the Law. "Neighbour" does not, in the Old Testament, mean any man that you are brought into relation with, as it does in the New Testament. Moreover, side by side with this higher though limited teaching in the Old Testament, there are statements of a very different character, which exhibit the unforgiving temper in various degrees of intensity, and yet regard such vindictiveness in a man

as compatible with his enjoying the Divine forgiveness. The Psalmist who wrote—

> " God is mine helper;
> The Lord is with them that uphold my soul:
> He shall requite the evil unto mine enemies,"

and closed the Psalm with the expression of sated vengeance—

> " Mine eye hath seen its desire upon mine enemies " (Ps. liv. 4, 5, 7),

felt not the slightest hesitation in believing that God had forgiven him and heard his prayers for vengeance on his neighbour. In Psalm cxii. this revengeful temper is ascribed to the ideal righteous man:

> " He hath dispersed abroad, he hath given to the needy;
> His righteousness endureth for ever " (ver. 9).
>
> " His heart is established, he shall not be afraid,
> Until he see his desire upon his adversaries " (ver. 8).

In the Old Testament, therefore, there was no such thing as a prescribed and unquestioned doctrine of forgiveness of one's neighbour, and a Jew, however he chose to act towards his personal enemy, could justify his conduct from his sacred writings.[1]

From the Old Testament, accordingly, we pass to the Jewish books between the Old and New Testaments. In Ecclesiasticus we find some advance on the Old

[1] See my edition of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, pp. xcii.–xcv., 155, 156: *Religious Development between the Old and New Testaments*, pp. 133–159. On the other side, see Abraham's *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels*, pp. 150–167.

Testament, but it is not of sufficient significance to require notice here. There is, however, another work of the second century B.C.[1] in which a doctrine of forgiveness in relation to one's neighbour is taught, that infinitely transcends that of Ecclesiasticus and is scarcely less noble than that of the New Testament. In this work the duty of forgiveness is inculcated in the highest form known to us, namely, that of restoring the offender to communion with us—a communion which he had forfeited through his offences. And this is likewise the essence of the Divine forgiveness, as we have already seen, namely, God's restoration of the sinner to communion with Him, a communion from which his sin had banished him.

But our author shows that it is not always possible for the man who has suffered the wrong to compass such a perfect relation with the man who has done the wrong, and yet that the man who has suffered the wrong can always practise forgiveness in a very real though in a limited degree, however unreasonable or unrepentant the man may prove who has done the wrong. Here, then, we have arrived at the first form of true forgiveness. In this case the man who has undergone the wrong can, our author maintains, get rid of the feeling of personal resentment, and take up a right and sympathetic attitude to the offender, though he does not for a moment condone the moral wrongness of his conduct. Thus true forgiveness in this sense is synonymous with banishing the feeling of personal resentment, a

[1] *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (ed. Charles, 1908), pp. xcii., xcv., 155, 156.

feeling which rises naturally within us when we suffer wrong, and which, if indulged, leads to hate. When we have achieved this right attitude towards the offender,—that is, got rid of the feeling of resentment,—the way is open for his return to a right relation with us—a return, however, which cannot be effected until the offender has confessed his wrong-doing, and purged himself from the evil spirit which led to it. *This banishment of resentment from the heart is the first and essential duty in all true forgiveness*, and it is often all that a man can compass; and apparently the Divine forgiveness has analogous limitations—at all events within the sphere of the present life.

It would be hard to exaggerate the importance of this passage in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, the teaching of which, however, was never accepted, officially or otherwise, by the Pharisees. It was never authoritative save in certain circles of Pharisaic mystics, who in due time found a congenial home in the Christian Church. So little, indeed, did the Pharisaic legalists—the dominating power in Pharisaism—appreciate this work that they did not think it worth preserving. For its preservation we are indebted to the Christian Church.

When we come down to the New Testament, we shall not be surprised that our Lord accepts this teaching on the primary form of true forgiveness—accepts it and yet lifts it up into a higher plane, by showing that herein human forgiveness and divine forgiveness are essentially one and the same. Our Lord teaches us therein that we are to cherish the *spirit of forgiveness* towards those

that have wronged us, for two reasons. First, because such must be our spirit if we are truly sons of God. By having God's spirit we show our kinship with God. "Love your enemies," our Lord declares, "and pray for them that persecute you, that so you may be sons of your Father in heaven." The second is given in the great declaration: "For God maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth his rain on the just and on the unjust." *Quite clearly here Christ teaches us that God cherishes no resentful feelings towards His children that have sinned against Him*; that He does not need to be propitiated or reconciled to man, but that He freely showers His gifts on His erring children and keeps the way open for their return to communion with Him. Similarly, St. Paul writes to the members of the Church of Ephesus: "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ hath forgiven you." Yes, this forgiveness has been freely proffered to the sons of men without money and without price, if only they would receive it.

It is clear, therefore, that in the teaching of our Lord and in that of St. Paul the spirit of forgivingness is an essential attribute of God, and that no expiation, no satisfaction, is necessary on man's part in order to obtain it. All that is necessary on man's part is true repentance. Without repentance on man's part God cannot forgive, but if a man, no matter how great or heinous his sin may be, truly repent, he can take home to his troubled heart the comforting assurance that already his forgiveness is sealed in heaven.

We have now seen that alike as regards God and man forgiveness has two meanings. A man forgives in the first and primary sense when he puts away from him the sense of irritation and resentment against the man who has wronged him; and entertains towards the offender the spirit of forgiveness. By so doing he shows, as our Lord teaches us, that he is a son of our Father in heaven; for that God has always entertained this spirit of forgiveness towards sinful man. Now alike in the case of both God and man, forgiveness can often be exercised only in this limited form in this world; for the offender may refuse to repent and persevere in his wrong-doing; but, till a man is assured of this, he must try to practise forgiveness in its second and complete form. But forgiveness in the second and full sense of the word is not realised when a man masters his feelings of resentment, and entertains a spirit of forgiveness towards the man who has wronged him. It is something immeasurably larger. It is not realised until the offender is restored to communion with all that is best and Christlike in us. It cannot be satisfied till the wrong-doer has abjured the evil that has created the breach of communion with us, till he is lifted out of the evil spirit of his wrongness and restored to communion with what is most Christlike in us and so far into communion with God. "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him" (Luke xvii. 3); and again: "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained

thy brother" (Matt. xviii. 15). This, my brethren, is Christian forgiveness in the full sense; which of us fulfils it? Let us now compare divine and human forgiveness together; by so comparing them, we shall see that true human forgiveness is the exact counterpart of God's.

1. For, inasmuch as God is ever seeking to deliver the sinner from his sin and reconcile him to Himself, so the true Christian must endeavour to deliver the offender from his wrongness and restore him to fellowship with himself.

2. The second parallelism, which we have already noticed, is that, as God's forgiveness is no deliverance from the penalties of sin, but from sin itself, so true human forgiveness is, of course, no deliverance from the natural penalties of sin, as this is impossible, or necessarily even from the conventional, but from the evil spirit of wrongness that issued in the evil deed.

3. A third parallelism is to be found in the fact that, as God cannot forgive man save he repent, so man cannot forgive his brother save he repent; for if it were possible for a man to receive the forgiveness of God or of his neighbour without repenting of his wrong-doing, would it not imply to him that he might go on hating truth and holiness, that he might go on hating his brethren, and living in selfishness and sin: a state of things that it is impossible to realise or conceive.

Thus, from whatever aspect we regard human forgiveness, we find it to be exactly of the same nature as the divine. God's forgiveness of man is the restoration of

man to communion with Him : our forgiveness of our neighbour is his restoration to communion with all that is holiest in us. Thus, through our forgiveness, through fellowship with whatever there is that is Christlike in us, the penitent rises to Divine forgiveness, to fellowship with God. And as Divine forgiveness, regarded in another aspect, is deliverance from sin, so true human forgiveness, when viewed in a like aspect, is likewise deliverance from sin, as we have already seen ; only, of course, in a very limited and subordinate degree.

We are now in a position to understand man's power of binding and loosing spoken of in such verses as "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. xviii. 18) ; and again : "Whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them ; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained" (John xx. 23). This power our Lord entrusted to the Church as a whole and to the individual Churches which constituted it, and not to any particular group within it as the apostles or the Christian ministry, as Bishop Westcott has pointed out on the passage in St. John, and as may also be inferred from 2 Cor. ii. 10, where St. Paul, writing to the Church in Corinth, says : "To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also ; . . . what I also have forgiven, . . . for your sakes have I forgiven it in the person of Christ." Here St. Paul forgives a man not as an apostle, but as a representative of the congregation, and forgives because the congregation forgives. The reason, moreover, that St. Paul gives as showing it

to be their duty to forgive is instructive : " Forgive him and comfort him, lest he be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow." Despairing of man's forgiveness, he may despair also of God's. Had the congregation refused to forgive this man, it would have been to shut him out from their love, from their mercies, from the universe of God's love, so far as they were part of it, and thus to close up, so far as they were concerned, the passage of possible return. Thus, instead of remitting his sins, they would have retained them, perhaps to the utter perdition of their unhappy brother. This prerogative of binding and loosing, this power of the keys, belongs to every Christian as such—that is, so far as he attains to the ideal man. Hence it is that our Lord, the ideal and perfect man, declared : " *The Son of Man* hath power on earth to forgive sins." Now the Son of Man was in perfect communion and fellowship with the Father in heaven, and thus restoration to fellowship with Him was in fullest measure restoration to fellowship with the Father, and so deliverance from sin. And so far as the spirit of the Son of Man exists in us, we too can admit in lesser measure the repentant, through our forgiveness, to the forgiveness of the Father ; we too can absolve. Thus, " whatsoever we loose on earth is loosed in heaven." Hereby we are enabled to understand the significance of the words of absolution declared by our Church to the repentant : " I absolve thee from all thy sins." These words may be used by every faithful follower of the Son of Man, but are authoritatively pronounced by the minister as the representative of

the Church, as representative of all that is best and holiest and Godlike in our humanity. And restoration to this communion, the Communion of Saints, is likewise restoration to communion with God. It is needless to add that it is only the truly penitent that can accept the proffered absolution and fellowship.

If we but reflect, we can discover how continually this power is exercised in life by every true Christian. Who has not known from what a burthen he has been delivered when his confession of long-concealed guilt has met with loving sympathy, with human forgiveness, where perhaps he expected rebuke, mayhap reprobation; and how from this forgiveness he has gained the assurance of Divine forgiveness? Here indeed is true absolution. So, likewise, every parent who has received back a repentant daughter, and welcomed with the outstretched arms of forgiving love a returning prodigal, has, in either case, by his free forgiveness loosed from sin and granted absolution. On the other hand, how many parents there are who, by refusal of forgiveness, have retained and intensified every transgression of their children. The parent who refuses to forgive his repentant child has forfeited, so long as he does so, every claim to the forgiveness of our Father in heaven. On the other hand, every man who, by his love, reclaims a wanderer from God's kingdom, or lifts a brother out of the evil spirit of lust or hate or uncharitableness, has in each instance granted absolution, has in each instance been a fellow-worker with God.

XVIII.

FORGIVENESS—III.

"The strength of sin is the law."—1 Cor. xv. 56.

"Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."—Matt. v. 39.

"If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him."—Luke xvii. 3.

BEFORE we enter on our subject this afternoon, it may be well to recall a few of the conclusions we arrived at in our two previous sermons on the forgiveness of sins. Amongst others, we found that forgiveness was not a matter of transcendent difficulty with God, but that it had its fount and spring in the divine nature, and not in any external source or cause; that God was a just God and a Saviour; yea, a just God, and therefore a Saviour. Further, we found that forgiveness neither undoes the fact of sin nor remits its penalties, but is a restoration to communion with God of the soul that had become alienated from God through sin, and that this restoration to communion carries with it a progressive deliverance from sin, whereby our alienation from our brethren also is removed; and moreover that the divine forgiveness is conditional on our forgiveness of our brethren: "If ye forgive not men their

trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you." Next we saw that divine and human forgiveness are alike in kind, though different in degree, and that from whatever aspect we regarded forgiveness, we found it to be exactly of the same nature as the divine. We saw further that forgiveness assumes one or other of two forms according to the circumstances of the case; and that, whereas forgiveness in the fullest sense of the word meant the restoration of the person who had done the wrong to communion with him who had suffered the wrong, it was not always possible to achieve this perfect relation owing to the persistent impenitence of the offender. In this case we found that the grace of forgiveness could still be exercised, though in a limited degree, and that forgiveness in this sense was synonymous with the banishment of the personal feeling of resentment towards the offender, and the recovery of a right and sympathetic attitude towards him—an attitude, however, which does not for a moment condone the moral wrongness of his conduct. When we have got rid of all resentful and spiteful feelings towards the offender, the way is open for his return to a right relation with us, in case he admits his wrong-doing and purges himself from the evil spirit that led to the wrong-doing. We saw further that our Lord recognised that human forgiveness in this sense was essentially one and the same with divine forgiveness; that He taught us to cherish a spirit of forgiveness towards those who have wronged us; for that God has always done so towards His erring children,

We found, further, that often, alike in the case of God and man, forgiveness cannot be exercised save in this limited sense owing to the persistence of the offender in his wrong-doing. Finally, we learnt that forgiveness in the second and full sense of the word postulated not only the enthronement in our hearts of the spirit of forgiveness towards the offender, but the restoration of the offender on his repentance to communion with all that is best and Christlike in us. Here the analogy between human and Divine forgiveness is perfect. They are in essence the same, though the measure in which they are exercised differs all but infinitely. In the exercise of such full forgiveness we forgive, as our Lord puts it, the debt of a hundred pence, whereas God forgives us the ten thousand talents—the one sum being roughly about six hundred thousand times as great as the other.

Our task this afternoon is to deal with two statements of our Lord which are apparently in direct conflict with each other. The first is, "Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." This verse appears to teach unconditionally the doctrine of non-resistance and to justify all the extravagances of Tolstoy and the various Peace Societies. But the second, which just as certainly comes from our Lord, is equally strong in the other direction: "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him"; or, taking the parallel passage in Matt. xviii. 15–17: "If thy brother sin against thee, go, shew him his fault between thee

and him alone: if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.[1] But if he hear thee not, take with thee one or two more, that at the mouth of two witnesses or three every word may be established. And if he refuse to hear them, tell it unto the Church; and if he refuse to hear the Church also, let him be unto thee as the Gentile and the publican."

Now in order to explain these apparently conflicting passages, there are certain facts which we must, to begin with, take into account. The first of them, as we have remarked in an earlier sermon, is that the conception of sin varied at different ages. From this standpoint the world's history might be divided into three periods—the first, the Period of Moral Insensibility; the second, the Period of Law; the third, the Period of Grace.

1. The Period of Moral Insensibility—that is, the period when men were unconscious of their sin. Though this condition may be found existing in some individuals of every age and nation, to find it embracing an entire people we must have recourse to the darkness of heathenism at the present day, to the old inhabitants of Canaan that were destroyed by Israel, or, best of all, to the ancient Greeks of the time of Homer, and the ages preceding him, of which we have a trustworthy account in his great poem, the *Iliad*. In this poem there is

[1] The two verses that follow are regarded by many critics as a later addition to the text. Their form (cf. the use of the term "Church") is to all appearances late, but they may be an expansion of actual words of our Lord, since the thought underlying them, save in the last clause, is in keeping with our Lord's teaching.

hardly the barest recognition of the distinction of right and wrong; there is no consciousness of sin as sin; sin is regarded as a personal affront sustained by the injured, whereas, to those unaffected by it, it is contemplated with simple indifference. There is no consciousness of wrong-doing or sin, and accordingly no disinterested hatred of wrong-doing or sin. The age is non-moral, not immoral. There is, accordingly, as has been remarked, no villain in the *Iliad* — not, indeed, that the characters are pure or true, for the most of them are capable of the most atrocious deeds; but that the recognition of right and wrong was too vague, and its observance too occasional, to serve as a principle for the division of mankind into good and bad. Like his characters, the poet himself was, for the most part, wanting in that moral discernment and moral indignation which give birth to a disinterested hatred of wrong-doing or sin. It is obvious that under such circumstances no high virtue was possible, while the moral degradation which attends on the loss of self-respect was equally precluded. Forgiveness, in the full meaning of the word, as deliverance from sin, from a known or felt alienation from God, could not be received by such a non-moral condition of heart. Without the consciousness of sin there is no place for forgiveness in the full sense of the word.

2. The Period of Law. "By the law comes the knowledge of sin," saith St. Paul. The diffusion of the knowledge of law gives every man a rule of conduct for himself and a criterion for the conduct of his neighbour.

Thus mankind falls into two classes, the good and the bad, according as they obey or break this law; and the one class is regarded with respect, and the other with feelings of hatred and reprobation. This feeling of hatred towards the vicious has taken the place of the general indifference to the vicious in the first stage. Where, as among the Jews, the knowledge of the law was fuller and more mature, their attitude towards the sinner was that of unmixed hatred. The result of these feelings is that a hard-and-fast line is drawn between the virtuous and the vicious, confining the good to the society of the good, and the vicious to the society of his fellows in guilt. We have herein a most important safeguard to society—a safeguard, however, that shuts out the vicious from return to the circle of holiness and purity. As the one class rises in virtue, the other sinks in vice. The unofficial condemnation of society is still more severe than the legal one: it binds a man in his sin by excluding him from the circle of the good; it transforms the lapse of human frailty into abiding sin, the passing distemper into lifelong disease.

Thus, under the sole reign of law, men sympathise only with the injured. For the injurer they have nothing but anger and exclusion, which confirm him in his sin; for the office of law is to condemn; it cannot deliver from sin; forgiveness is therefore impossible under its sole and unquestioned reign. The most striking effects of law on man are condensed by St. Paul into the significant words, "The strength of sin is the law."

With the law comes the consciousness of sin, and thus the discipline of law is absolutely necessary to prepare man for a higher discipline—that of grace; for without a consciousness of his sin man would have felt no need of grace. There can be no Gospel for a man without a foregoing sense of condemning law; the requirements of the law teach man his need of the Gospel. Where there is no law there is no sense of sin, no felt need of forgiveness, and so no capacity for grace. In all instances the discipline of law must precede the economy of grace; the thunders of Sinai, the beatitudes of the Mount.

3. The Period of Grace brings with it not only sympathy with the wronged, but also sympathy for the wrong-doer. As the law came to bind the offender in his sin, in his conscious breach of law, grace comes to loose him from his sin—the intrinsic disease that is destroying him—not from its penalties, but from the sin itself, by restoring him to communion with God. The rigours of the law have taught him his infinite need, his absolute helplessness, till his heart cries out for the living God. And God stoops to the need that calls Him down, and fills with His fulness the heart that is thirsting for Him. And from the restored communion of the child with his divine Father there follows a progressive deliverance from sin, the child growing to be more and more like unto the Father, in whom he now essays consciously to live and move.

The Periods of Moral Insensibility, Law, and Grace, though successive as a rule, coexist also. Hence we explain the apparent contradictions of our Lord's com-

mands, "When smitten on the right cheek, turn the other"; and "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him." These commands are illustrations of a well-defined principle which lay at the foundation of our Lord's teaching and St. Paul's. This principle is, that while we should resent an act of conscious and deliberate wrong-doing, we should not resent an act of unconscious wrong-doing. The rightness of such a principle at once commends itself to our judgment. In the light of this principle, then, let us examine the foregoing precepts: "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him"; and "When smitten on the right cheek, turn the other also." At the outset these appear to be in direct conflict. The first requires us to resent a wrong; the second as distinctly forbids it. The solution of the problem can be discovered by studying the context in which these commands occur, which shows that these commands apply to different classes. The second deals with our duty towards an offending heathen; the first directs us how to act towards an offending brother. "Brother" was the term used by early Christians in speaking of each other; hence the precept, "If thy brother trespass against thee," etc., treats of a wrong committed by a Christian brother, who, if he persisted in his conscious wrongness of spirit, despite rebuke, was to be rebuked. Turning to the other command, we find throughout the opening chapter of the Sermon on the Mount that, though the heathen are not directly specified, the relation of Christ's followers to them is continually dealt with; for His followers are

to regard themselves as lights amid the darkness of heathenism, as men doomed to meet with insults and reviling, cruelty and persecution, from the heathen world. The use of the word "enemy" in the forty-fourth verse of that chapter points to the same conclusion; for it cannot apply to a fellow-Christian on this first publication of the Gospel, seeing that it distinguished its adherents so sharply from the surrounding world. The gloomy foreboding which saw an enemy in a fellow-Christian belongs not to the Sermon on the Mount. Moreover, the words, "Whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain," refer to a well-known privilege enjoyed by Roman officials, who had the right of impressing into their service for limited distances the members of the subject States through which they travelled. Seeing now that the commands, "Turn the other cheek," and "Rebuke an offending brother," refer to different classes, their supreme reasonableness at once discloses itself. The follower of Christ who wronged his fellow-Christian, did so with a clear consciousness of the wrong; his conduct was a breach of known obligation, and was therefore to be resented. "Rebuke him," our Lord commands, and rest not content till he acknowledges the claims of dishonoured brotherhood. Such was to be their attitude towards their fellow-Christians; but in relation to the injurious heathen they were to act differently; their attitude to such was to be that of passive endurance: "Love your enemies; bless them that curse you." They are to bear themselves thus because the heathen, as

such, transgressed no known duty, was bound by no ties of brotherhood, and, therefore, could violate none. To resent the injurious treatment of such was therefore unreasonable. "Whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also."

It is, perhaps, needless to remark that in the first ages of Christianity, a Jew would come under the category of a brother, as almost all the Apostles and first teachers, while Christians, were devout Jews.

Now that we have grasped the principle by which Christian conduct was to be guided, we shall proceed to show how exactly it was observed by our Lord Himself when exposed to insult and injury. Throughout His ministry every wrong inflicted on Him by the Jews was resented in words of unmeasured rebuke and condemnation, while Sodom and Gomorrha were described as less guilty than His own generation; but the contrast comes out most clearly when summoned before His judges. Before the high priest His words are full of indignation and menace, "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven." When smitten by an officer of the high priest (John xviii. 22, 23), our Lord resents the injustice, and thus rebukes him: "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?" This is not turning the other cheek, but emphatically a rebuke of an offending brother.

But at the judgment-seat of Pilate the bearing of our Lord is wholly different. There He uttered no threat, displayed no sign of resentment, but calmly

exonerated Pilate from the chief guilt in His condemnation. "He that delivereth me to you hath the greater sin." In like manner on the Cross, His prayer of forgiveness for them that crucified Him refers naturally to the Roman soldiers, as we conclude from the significant words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Our Lord's example is the practical interpretation of His commands.

Let us now advert to St. Paul's teaching and conduct as embodying this principle. We shall content ourselves with only two illustrations. In 1 Cor. v. 9–11 we read: "I wrote unto you . . . not to company with fornicators; yet not altogether with fornicators of this world . . . for then ye must needs go out of the world: but . . . if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, . . . with such an one, not to eat." The rationale of this distinction is obvious: the Christian brother who lived in the practice of impurity was guilty of violating the most solemn obligations; whereas, the heathen fornicator was not conscious of a breach of the law. Again, though St. Paul submitted to every form of insult and injury from without, he did not tolerate, even for a moment, disrespect from within. He passively endured the reproach of scoffer and heathen, but was quick to rebuke a brother that had offended; and this because the heathen or infidel was unconscious of breaking any obligation; whereas, the Christian brother was offending in the face of duty and conscience.

Let us now return to the question of forgiveness as affected by Christ's commands. These require us not

in any case to act from mere personal feeling. The only action that the injured might take was in the case of a brother to rebuke him ; and this action was not to be a measure of retaliation, or the outcome of mere personal feeling, but to proceed from the Christlike motive of delivering a brother from the evil of his sin. The spirit of revenge or retaliation was to be banished wholly from the Christian heart. This was to be the first stage of Christian forgiveness, and there could be no forgiveness without it.

But, further, our Lord commanded : " If any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also " ; *i.e.* if their heathen neighbours —heathen in spirit at all events—stripped them of any of their possessions by any legal chicanery, they were to offer no resistance. And why ? Because, in the first instance, they were not to proceed against the injurious heathen merely on the ground of their personal loss or inconvenience ; for just as *all personal feeling and desire of selfish revenge* were to be eliminated from the Christian life, so they were not to suffer *mere personal loss or inconvenience* to move them to prosecute the heathen aggressor, and, unless actuated by some higher motive than personal loss, they were not to proceed at all against him. Our Lord taught His disciples to be ready to lose all for the kingdom of heaven's sake, and that the special circumstances had now arisen which called for this sacrifice. And the disciples did not prove unequal to the sacrifice required ; for the early Christians, we read, " took joyfully the spoiling

of their goods." But though they were not to proceed against the injurious heathen on the ground of selfish loss, was it not incumbent on them to do so with a view to restoring him to a better mind ? for this was indeed a Christian aim, and should be ultimately the determining motive in all such action.

But to restore a heathen to a better mind, and that before a heathen court, could only seem hopeless, even to the most sanguine, and could not fail to embroil them with the various executives under which they lived, and so turn them from their great task of the regeneration of humanity at large. The whole tone indeed of society had to be leavened with the Spirit of Christ before such action could really have served its purpose. Had the Apostles and early teachers of Christianity prosecuted their individual rights before the heathen tribunals ; had St. Paul turned aside from the gigantic work of his apostolate to seek redress for personal losses, or bring home to the offender the sense of justice through the secular arm, the evangelisation of the world would have been checked at the outset, and the light that came down from heaven would have been largely extinguished amid the conflicting aims and egotisms of the injurer and the injured.

XIX.

FORGIVENESS—IV.

"If thy brother sin, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him."—LUKE xvii. 3.

"Judge not, that ye be not judged."—MATT. vii. 1.

BEFORE we enter on this concluding study of the subject of forgiveness, it will be advisable to summarise some of the conclusions in our last sermon on this subject. In that sermon we dealt with the apparently conflicting commands of our Lord: "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him"; and "When smitten on the right cheek, turn the other also." Of these commands the first requires us to resent the wrong, while the second as distinctly forbids it. The solution of the difficulty we found in the fact that the commands apply to different classes. The first deals with our Christian duty towards an offending brother; the second with our Christian duty to an offending heathen. This fact discloses their extreme reasonableness. For the follower of Christ who wronged his fellow-Christian did so with a clear consciousness of the wrong. His conduct was therefore a breach of known duty, and was as such to be dealt with. "Rebuke him," our

Lord commands, and rest not till he owns the wrong. But, if after due remonstrance in private and subsequently before others he refuse to do so, then he is to be treated as one outside the pale of the Christian community. So much for the command relating to a fellow-Christian. But in relation to an injurious heathen, Christ's disciples were to act differently; and their attitude was to be that of passive endurance: "When smitten on the right cheek, they were to turn the other also." When the State official forced the farmer to unyoke his oxen from the plough and harness them to his carriage, they were not to resent this impressment, but were without reluctance to go with him twice as far as they were required. The heathen, as such, transgressed no known duty, and therefore could violate none.

These principles, we saw, were observed by our Lord before His judges. Before the high priest, who, as a Jew, was naturally to be regarded as a brother, our Lord's words were instinct with threatening and rebuke: "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven"; and when unjustly smitten by an officer of the high priest, He forthwith rebuked him in the words: "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?" In both these instances we have the rebuke of an offending brother. But before Pilate's judgment-seat how differently our Lord bears Himself. There He uttered no threat and displayed no sign of indignation, but calmly exonerated Pilate from the chief guilt in His

condemnation. "He that delivered me to thee hath the greater sin."

Thus the principle underlying our Lord's action, and likewise that of St. Paul, as we saw from several instances, was that, when a brother sinned, he was to be rebuked to bring home to him the knowledge of his sin, because he was sinning against the light he had; whereas the heathen was not to be visited with our indignation, as he had not sinned against known light and truth. In short, spiritual aims and not self-involved feelings or purely material ends were to direct and mould their life and action. They were not to take action at all, unless actuated by higher motives than purely personal wrong or personal loss. But, though the early Christian was not to proceed against the heathen aggressor on such grounds, was it not incumbent on him to do so in the interests of the State of which he was a member, when the offence was one tending to the overthrow of social order? But to restore a heathen to a better mind, and that before a heathen tribunal, could only have seemed utopian, even to the most sanguine, and would only have served to embroil the rising Faith with the various executives under which it worked, and so have checked at the outset the evangelisation of the world.

The other and indirect duty, which seems to have been overlooked by the commands of Christ, *i.e.* the obligation to prosecute the offender when his offence was one tending to the overthrow of social order, was necessarily forgone under the special circumstances of the time.

The paramount duty of devotion to mankind at large dispensed, for the time being, with the obligations of Christ's disciples to their respective States. Their immediate task was not the reorganisation of the outer forms of social life, but the creation of a new spirit. They were to reform from within outward. For the time being they were to be men without a country, and without political obligations, and so released from the duty of prosecution on behalf of social order.

Such was the duty of primitive Christians under the special circumstances of the time; but change of circumstances brought about change in the mode of action enjoined by our Lord, though no change in the feeling or motive required by Him. This change of circumstances has arisen from the continuous approximation of the outer forms of social life to the Christian spirit from the leavening of society with Christian ideas, and the more or less imperfect reconciliation of Church and State. The Christian can no longer hold aloof from his share in promoting social reform and maintaining social order, and to this end action in the case of wrong is imperative, where by wrong we mean deliberate insult or injury; but such action must in all cases be taken, not from purely personal motives, but on the ground of right and for the sake of the offender and the brotherhood. A Christian may not prosecute for purely selfish ends, but only in case a brother's well-being is involved, or a question of equity, or the discharge of a public duty. But while we clearly recognise the Christian obligation to abstain from the avenging of

purely personal wrongs, we must beware of confounding with true Christian forgiveness that unspiritual egotism which treats moral wrong as though it were but a merely personal affront; which regards an injury ignored as a sin forgiven, which considers an injustice glossed over as a transgression absolved. Such action, for it cannot be called forgiveness, is treason to holiness, is but a form of self-indulgence, and shows a fatal confusion between personal and righteous resentment —the mark of a mind full of itself, and devoid of any true love and sense of right. Willingness to bear with quietude a deliberate injury, or preference of peace at any price to conflict, are characteristics of an unspiritual and often cowardly personality which, rather than meet the demands of a righteous indignation, sacrifices its claims to the fears of a craven spirit or the bribes of a self-indulgent ease. But the ignoring of a sin cannot in any way lessen the burthen of its turpitude. Christian truth and purity require that any change in our attitude to the offender should only arise in response to a change in his temper and spirit; for Christian forgiveness can not be given, save to the repentant in spirit and the contrite in heart.

From this counterfeit forgiveness, we shall now turn to a very prevalent characteristic of society, which is in direct conflict with the spirit of forgiveness, and with which we are all too well conversant, *i.e.* censoriousness, or the judging spirit, with reference to which our Lord issues the command: "Judge not, that ye be not judged." This spirit of rash and heedless criticism sets

us in an unfriendly and unreceptive attitude to our fellow-men; and, while for the most part it blinds us to a brother's merit, it makes us quick to discern his failings, and daily entices the unwary, and even the wise, into precipitate and self-trammelling judgments; and mere impressions are thereby converted into final conclusions, which commit us to a certain definite view of a man, and so close our hearts to any fresh revelation that further intercourse with him may give. Every action and utterance are wrested into harmony with the conception so hastily formed, and thus, through the action of our irreverent criticism, we condemn ourselves to ignorance of a brother's character and to blindness to a brother's worth. Irreverent, indeed, this is, and presumptuous in the highest degree to pass judgment on the inner life, the unknown capacities, and the indefinite possibilities within the reach of any child of man. Yet the feebler our discernment, the meaner our capacity, the fewer our spiritual graces, the more assurance have we in pronouncing such baseless and unjust judgments. This censorious spirit is likewise slanderous, of the Evil One, evil; as its contrary, the forgiving spirit, is large, divine, and full of expectation; full of the reverence of an undefined hope in the presence of even the meanest son of man, because he is likewise a son of God.

In the foregoing we have been dealing with that irreverent and thoughtless temper which manifests itself in hasty judgments, but not with that temper of ill-will or hatred which gives birth to malicious judg-

ments ; for when ill-will or hatred beholds or thinks of its object it is apt to be hurried into malicious activities, or at all events into slanderous or unjust censure.

But hatred cannot be indulged in with impunity. Every indulgence of it recoils on the person guilty of it. Hatred of our neighbour is everything that is wrong, It entails a loss of self-control in ourselves, while all the dignity and beauty and greatness in others perish before it as before the consuming blast of a furnace. When hate nurses its wrath to keep it warm, it is significant of a declension on the part of the individual or the race ; it marks a degradation of ideal and character, a reversion to type, a recrudescence of a lower stage of civilisation. It blinds the man and the nation that become obsessed by it so that they cannot see things as they truly are. Its victims never understand those they hate, and understanding is the beginning of all wisdom. Hate robs of insight and even of foresight. It leads to feverish and ill-considered action.

And finally, hate can never slake its thirst, nor by virtue of its own power shake itself free from the cause which gives rise to it. If you hate a man, he may shun you, but you cannot get quit of him. The most unlikely things cause your thoughts to revert to the object of your hate. Wherever you go, whatever society you frequent, the man you hate is at your side, your enemy has established himself in your heart, and you are bound hand and foot by this Frankenstein of your own creation.

And this awful spiritual condition holds true, whether

it be an individual or a nation, that surrenders itself to this satanic spirit. And if a nation hug to its bosom such a spirit, it must bring about its disfranchisement in the kingdom of God, and, however great be its proud gifts, it must inexorably go over into the kingdom of outer darkness.

But, turning aside from these contraries of the forgiving spirit, let us turn to those who cherish no empty chambers in their hearts for the carousals of any unclean spirit that may choose to enter; who are really struggling to overcome the temptation of yielding to rash judgments or irreverent criticism; who are striving to hold all men in reverence as beings of infinite possibilities, as children of the Almighty Father. Let us consider the spirit in which such should live and work. First, then, it is patent to all how often a genuine desire of kindness fails to attain its purpose from some infelicity or want of sympathy in the manner of doing it. The imperfect or ungenial manner, however, let it be borne in mind, is merely the index of the imperfect and half-sympathetic spirit; for the outward manner is the expression of the inward feeling. Such ungenialness in our acts of kindness robs them of their intended value; they discover a spirit only half-gracious; they show that our acts are not the product of pure goodwill. Again, if our remonstrances against individual wrong betray the swellings of irritation or the undertones of a wounded self-love, the heart, but now smitten with regret, will drown in the floods of what it deems a just resentment, the rising utterance of its contrition; and

thus we shall have but inflamed the wound we sought to heal, and so far from forgiving our brother, from delivering him from his injurious spirit, we shall but have confirmed and rooted him therein. Forgiveness and love, if they would be perfect, must be free of every defilement of self. For, when failure attends on our efforts to recover the alienated love of a brother, or deliver him from his wrongness of spirit, if in the midst of our disappointment we are conscious of irritation and wounded pride, we discover, alas! that it was not the pure spirit of forgiveness that prompted our overtures, but one largely mixed with self-regarding motives, of whose inward presence the sense of irritation is the unfailing outward sign. But this knowledge, however humbling, will be instructive; it will teach us that every effort, however imperfect, to manifest a forgiving spirit to the unfriendly, endows us with the insight of a purer spirit of forgiveness, and of a profounder unselfishness yet to be won.

All indulgence, then, of personal resentment is absolutely forbidden. The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God; but no law of Christ forbids—nay, rather the very Spirit of Christ calls for true moral resentment—that righteous anger which knows no taint of ill-will or wounded self-love, but which, springing from pure hatred of sin, suffers even a personal anguish over lost goodness, and is troubled into indignant tears in the presence of self-chosen blindness and deliberate guilt.

And now that we have completed this very inadequate

study of our subject, let us remark, in conclusion, how the two great Christian Sacraments are concrete expositions of the truths with which we have been dealing. Forgiveness, we have found, is restoration to communion with God, and Baptism proclaims the essential element in this truth at the outset; it authoritatively declares to humanity, doubtful whence it comes and whither it is going, that man is God's child—not a waif cast upon the shore of the ocean of being, not the offspring of countless chance and coincidence, not a son of evil ancestry, but a child of the Eternal; and so endowed with powers of communion with Him, of restoration to fellowship after every lapse therefrom. Forgiveness certainly may come to the human soul in countless ways, in the closet, on the lonely hillside, in the busy mart, or the crowded aisles of church and minster, and thereby restoration to communion with God and our brethren; but is not the Eucharist, the Lord's Supper faithfully received, the highest realisation of this fellowship, this communion with our God and Father and with our brethren in Him? Again and again when we have lost the spirit of true discipleship, when we have wandered afar, and soiled our hearts with the fellowship of the world and its idols, we return, after every failure, in true contrition, but without despair, to this great Sacrament of Forgiveness, yearning again to be restored to that position which, by our self-will, we had forfeited; to participate anew in the self-surrendered will of our Lord; to receive renewal and strength to do our appointed work and overcome

our peculiar temptations; to grasp again with deeper humility and reverence our Father's hand, which, in the haste and pride of self, we had let slip; seeking, in short, forgiveness in all its fulness at our Father's hands, restoration to His presence, restoration to His love.

And the contrite spirit receives above all that it can ask or think; for, in the bread broken and the wine outpoured, God Himself is known, and the heart is one with Him in eternal fellowship.

Is not this Sacrament of Forgiveness, my brethren, in all the meaning of the words—the Holy Communion?

XX.

NEUTRALITY.

"He that is not with me is against me."—MATT. xii. 30.

WHO is the Speaker, we may well ask, who made this claim, a claim absolutely unique and without parallel in the teaching of any other great religious leader in any age of the world?

The Speaker was a man who lived all His life in Galilee, saving for a few visits that He paid to Judea and adjoining districts. He came from a poor and despised city of Galilee. He had no advantages of rank or wealth. His education, moreover, though far above that of the skilled artisan class, to which He belonged, was not that which we associate with the learned schools in Jerusalem. And yet He knew Hebrew, and used Aramaic as His mother tongue, and must occasionally have used Greek; for Greek was familiar to many of the cultured and other inhabitants of Galilee, surrounded as they were on many sides by Greek-speaking cities. Of the first thirty years of His life we know nothing, save His notable visit with His parents to Jerusalem at the age of twelve. The thoughts that He had been pondering over even at that early age held Him fast in

Jerusalem after His parents had left. When, after three days, His parents returned to look for Him, they found Him in the Temple seated at the feet of the Doctors of Law and seeking for answers to the Divine problems that beset His mind. That He was ever afterwards indebted to the learned Doctors of the Law there is no direct evidence, though there may be some grounds for conjecturing some indebtedness. But if He availed Himself of their learning, He absolutely rejected their method of teaching—that is, He did not teach dogmatically and require His hearers to accept what He taught, because the Jewish Church said so, or certain great Rabbis so expounded. Not so ; what He taught carried with it the evidence of its own truth in the conscience of such as had ears to hear. His use of the Old Testament also was wholly unlike that of the scholars of the Jewish Church and of Christian scholars down practically to modern times. The Jewish scholars quoted the texts of the Old Testament in support of their arguments, wholly regardless of their original meaning and of the only meaning they could bear in their contexts. St. Paul, owing to his Rabbinical education, is sometimes guilty of the same misuse of the Old Testament, and the First Evangelist in the second chapter of his Gospel (ii. 15, 23) seeks to prove two events by two quotations, which in their original contexts have no bearing whatever on or reference to these events. This use of " proof texts " passed over into the Christian Church, and it was only in the last generation that this misuse of Scripture was beginning, and only beginning, to be got rid of.

In the face of these facts it is in the highest degree remarkable that, when our Lord quotes the Old Testament, He quotes it with a clear sense of the writer's meaning, and in such a way as to bring out the essential truth of the prophetic message.

In the next place, our Lord's independent and critical attitude towards the Old Testament was wholly unlike that of the Jewish Church and of the Christian Church down to the close of the last century. Christ was the first Higher Critic. Thus He did away with the distinction which the law made between clean and unclean meats. He condemned the law also for the readiness with which in Deuteronomy it granted divorce on most inadequate grounds, and recalled His hearers to the higher principle stated in the opening chapters of Genesis. This was an absolute denial of the Jewish claim that the law was infallible, final, and eternal, and prepared the way for St. Paul's still severer criticism of its validity. Next He approached their idolatrous worship of the Sabbath, and declared that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. St. Paul followed closely in the footsteps of his Master, and was still more sweeping in his condemnation of the observance of certain elements of the law. He forbade circumcision wholly, and put the entire law into a purely secondary place, maintaining that salvation was not possible through the works of the law, but through faith and life in Christ.

Such being our Lord's teaching, an irreconcilable breach with the scribes and Pharisees was inevitable.

The hostility of His opponents at last passed all bounds, and led them to join with the Sadducees in bringing about His death.

Thus our Lord broke with the learned classes in Palestine—the scribes, Pharisees, and Doctors of the Law. With the Sadducees He had already broken when, at the beginning of His ministry, as the Fourth Gospel tells us, He drove forth those who sold and bought in the Temple, thus making an attack on one of the great and unworthy sources of revenue of the chief priests.

Thus our Lord stood almost alone against all the religious, learned, and ruling classes of His nation; but, though standing thus alone, He made the tremendous claim: "He that is not with me is against me." If any of the greatest thinkers or religious leaders of the ancient world had so spoken, the mass of mankind, alike its wisest and its unwise, would have turned away in derision or in indifference. In completest contrast with these words stands the claim of Socrates, the wisest of all the Greeks. Far from declaring himself the possessor of any final or even partial form of wisdom, he maintained that the point in which he excelled all other teachers was just this, that in the field of truth he knew his own ignorance and was conscious of his own limitations. And yet this young Prophet of Galilee, who never wrote a book, who taught only for three years, and by His teaching and life alienated the so-called wise and learned men of His own nation, who won only a few converts, and finally died a malefactor's death, used no words of idle assumption when He said:

"He that is not with me is against me." History has shown in unmistakable terms the truth of these words. His life and teaching, as they reach ever wider and wider circles down the ages, have been steadily forcing alike individuals and nations to take thought and to take sides either for or against Him. For wherever His teaching comes, there follow deep travail of heart, broodings, doubts, conviction, the kindling of high hopes and fresh resolves; or of opposition, malignity, and hate. In fact, all that met Him unconsciously fell into one of three classes. The first was composed of those that accepted and loved Him; the second, of those that rejected and hated Him; and the third, of those that neither loved nor hated Him, but took up an attitude of neutrality or indifference towards Him. Such a division is at first sight an obvious and apparently a justifiable one, but is it a true one? Are there really three classes? When man is brought face to face with such claims, Christ declares that it is not. "He that is not with me is against me." This is the study before us.

Now, since the most outspoken attempt to justify the attitude of neutrality has appeared in recent years, we shall adjourn the consideration of this question for the present, and study the reception which Christ's claim met with in His own time.

The record of Christ's short ministry of three years is at the same time a record of the growing hostility of His countrymen against Him. The priestly and learned classes, as we have already shown, early took sides

against Him. This hostility was due to the radical antagonism existing between their character and teaching and those of our Lord. Their character we know. Their teaching was essentially dogmatic. Our Lord's was essentially not dogmatic. He appealed to the conscience of His hearers and never required a blind acceptance of His words.

On the defection of the ruling and learned classes, there still remained the masses (especially in Galilee) that were attracted by His teaching. Amongst these there were two types easy to distinguish. The first was represented by the peasants of Galilee. These Galilean peasants were intensely patriotic; they were full of national prejudices, but were on the whole moral and religious, and formed the best and soundest part of the nation. They cherished ardent expectations of the Messiah, and accordingly welcomed the young Prophet with the wildest enthusiasm. This enthusiasm so alarmed the Pharisees and chief priests that time and again they sent down chosen representatives to confront the young Prophet and crush Him with their arguments in the presence of the people. But He was not to be crushed. They could not entrap Him by their subtleties, nor get the better of Him by their cajoleries or flatteries. Sitting loose to all self-interest and ambition, He was beyond the reach alike of their bribes and their menaces. The failure of all such attempts to corrupt or crush the young Prophet served only to raise Him higher in the regard and reverence of the Galileans, till at last they sought by force to make Him their king. Now, had

our Lord lent Himself to their Messianic aspirations, He could easily have made Himself the master of all Palestine. But He refused to do so. He stood resolutely aloof from all the political parties of Palestine, as He had from the religious. He made no appeal to popular or class feeling. He declined to be drawn into disputes about property or capital. With a word He could have won the masses to His side. But He would not speak that word. And when, notwithstanding His refusal to become their king, some of the same multitudes still followed Him, He turned and set forth His claims in such severe terms, that they forsook Him forthwith, and only a bewildered few still clung fast to their allegiance.

But Christ drew faithful disciples not only from the sturdy peasant class of Galilee. He found them also amongst the publicans and sinners—classes that philosophers had regarded as hopeless, and popular opinion had branded with infamy, and by its merciless attitude had hardened into a temper of callousness and despair. Now amongst these Christ went in and out, and found, where it was wholly hidden from other eyes, the honest and good heart. By His wondrous sympathy and His faith in the goodness still latent within them, He lifted them out of their despair and sin, and quickened them with the power of a new life. Here also sides were taken for and against Him in all those who came under His immediate influence.

This necessity of taking sides for or against Christ becomes still more inevitable where individuals and not classes are dealt with in the Gospels. There we

find every man put to the test at his weakest point, and not a single jot of Christ's exclusive claim to supremacy is toned down or forgone, whoever the individual may be. Christ wants no disciple who has not counted the cost. Every one is tried exactly where, owing to his character, he is sure to feel Christ's service a hardship, exactly where sin is most attractive and conscience is most asleep. To the man who is adjourning the day of decision to a more convenient season He says: "Let the dead bury their dead, but come thou, follow me"; to the man who is covetous and whose chief desire is set on riches: "Sell all that thou hast, and come, follow me"; to the impure man: "Whoso looketh upon a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery already with her in his heart"; to the unforgiving: "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Heavenly Father forgive you"; to the proud and self-satisfied: "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven"; to the mass of commonplace folk belonging to all classes, who study first and chiefly and always their own interest and their own ease, but cloak their selfishness under the fashionable respectabilities of the day, He declares: "Whosoever saveth his life—taketh the line of least resistance or any other form of self-indulgence or self-satisfaction—the same shall lose it."

Having now sketched in briefest fashion our Lord's attitude to the classes and individuals of His own day, we return to the question whose consideration we

adjourned: Are there really three divisions amongst men with regard to Christ? Those who accept Him; those who reject Him; and those who are neutral and take no sides in the matter. In other words, is neutrality possible, when the claims of Christ, whatever forms of truth or duty they assume, are brought home to men? As we have already stated, Christ declared that such neutrality was impossible: "He that is not with me is against me."

Now, as we have already observed, this claim is one without a parallel in human history. Can it be admitted? To this question there are two answers. The first is that of certain physical scientists, who maintain that it should not be admitted, and that a man should not believe that which is not proved, and proved by evidence satisfactory to physical science, and that, until such evidence is forthcoming, he should adopt an attitude of neutrality.

The second answer is that the claims of Christ can be justified, not by the evidence of physical science, but by evidence of a higher order, and that this evidence is within the reach of all who would have it, and that neutrality in the face of such evidence is at once irrational and suicidal.

Now the case of the physical scientists was stated in its most vigorous and uncompromising form by Kingdon Clifford towards the close of last century:

"Belief is desecrated when given to unproved and unquestioned statements for the solace and private pleasure of the believer. . . . It is wrong always, everywhere and for every one to believe anything on insufficient evidence."

This means—to put it in its crudest form—that it is wrong to believe in anything that cannot be proved by the senses.

But many of us, perhaps most of us, are aware that if we judge physical science by this standard, it has no claim on our acceptance. For physical science is itself based on an unproved hypothesis—the hypothesis that the world is rational, that the laws of cause and effect are here and everywhere and always observed. Now this hypothesis of the absolute uniformity of nature has never been proved, nay more, it cannot be proved to demonstration by the evidence of the senses, or any other kind of evidence. What science can do is just this. By accepting the belief or hypothesis that nature is uniform, it can make discoveries, and every discovery is fresh evidence in support of this belief, and this evidence is growing in volume and conclusiveness as research advances. Since, therefore, science is always outrunning the evidence, as in fact it must do if it is to make any progress at all, is it, therefore, strange that in the world of religion faith must also outrun the evidence on which it acts? In fact, my brethren, the faith of every great scientist, of every true hero, of every real saint, outruns the evidence on which they respectively act: the spirit of high adventure and self-sacrifice is common to all these classes, and not one of them can justify his action from the standpoint of evidence demonstrable to the senses. Faith in each case springs from the necessity of satisfying an inner need of the spirit. In the case of the scientist there is the need of

believing that nature is subject to uniform laws, and that these laws are discoverable; in the case of the hero and the saint, there is the need of believing that this material world at its best can only satisfy our lower nature and is only a symbol of something above and beyond it, something spiritual and divine, to know and serve which they are assured is better than life itself.

In the next place, if the evidence of physical science were the only kind of evidence admissible, we should of course have to admit that there was no longer any just or reasonable ground for religious faith. But having made this concession, we cannot logically stop short there: we must go farther and confess that no rational evidence can be produced in favour of morality over and against immorality. Hence from the standpoint of purely physical science moral anarchy, such as prevails in Russia, has just as much to say for itself as the sublimest morality.

Let me make this point clearer. The task of physical science is to discover *that which is* in the realm of nature, not *that which should be* in the world of moral and spiritual beings: to accumulate and classify all the facts that come under the observation of the senses; not to determine their character for good or ill. Should it discover, as it may, the means of breaking up atoms into their ultimate elements, it would, it is believed, arm the nations with the power of absolutely exterminating each other to the last man. But this is no concern of science; for science as science cannot say whether

human life is a good thing or a bad. In fact it does not pronounce, nor can it pretend to pronounce, on the goodness or badness of any fact or process it brings to light. It is thus wholly incompetent to deal from its limited outlook with the moral and spiritual worlds that transcend its province. But though physical science cannot deal with the ultimate truths of religious faith, it can make some contribution, but this contribution is negative rather than positive. Its chief service is to free the human mind from credulities, superstitions, and self-delusions.

Having now done with the objections of physical science to faith, we have next to estimate the value of the comparative claims of science and faith on our allegiance. Now we all know that it is a matter of complete indifference to most of us whether certain laws of science are facts or not. Unless it is our specific duty to study these laws, we can adopt an attitude of absolute neutrality towards such conclusions of science as Einstein's doctrine of the relativity of knowledge, or the theory of the Röntgen rays, and a hundred others, and be not one whit the better or one whit the worse by the adopting of such a neutral attitude.

But in regard to the claims of the moral and spiritual worlds, neutrality is impossible. And why? Just because these claims bear directly on our conduct and shape our conduct, whether we will or no, for good or evil. Hence, if they are true, they are of vital importance, and if we adopt a neutral attitude towards them, such neutrality amounts to a rejection of them; for

we cannot stand still, morally or spiritually. If we are neutral, we are drifting, and drifting inevitably towards an attitude of indifference and spiritual death, or of active opposition.

The late Professor James, the most brilliant psychologist of his generation, rightly maintains this very truth in his interesting work, *The Will to Believe.* Neutrality, he urges, in such provinces is impossible. In their own domains, as we have already observed, the faith of the hero, as well as that of the scientific investigator, must outrun the evidence, if either of them is to be worthy of the name. But, whereas few men are fitted for scientific research, and not many are called to be pre-eminently heroic, all men are required to accept or reject the claims of moral and religious truth. For, with the exception of a minority, that constitutionally are mentally or morally incapable or have made themselves such, all men are fitted to judge between the claims of right and wrong in some degree; in some degree I repeat, and, when confronted with two alternative courses of conduct, to decide which is the higher and which the lower. But, not only are men fitted to decide for or against a certain line of action, they are bound by the essential nature of the spiritual and moral laws to come to a decision. For belief and doubt affect our conduct and affect it vitally, and herein enters the claim of Christ: "He that is not with me is against me." Hence if in such a case a man should say: I will adopt an attitude of neutrality, or I will come to a decision at a more convenient season, such

a man by so doing has already decided against the moral or religious claim at issue. For by failing to comply with it, he has acted as if there were no such claim, and, because he has not taken sides with the higher claim, he has actually taken sides against it. Hence we repeat that, as the faith of the hero or that of the scholar engaged in original research must outrun the evidence of the senses, so religious faith must in a still greater degree outrun such evidence. As the scholar and the hero act each in obedience to an inner need which he cannot justify on purely logical or scientific grounds, so the religious man acts in obedience to a still deeper need. James defines the religious man as one who believes " in the existence of the unseen world in which the riddles of this natural order may be explained." He maintains that the will to believe helps to create the facts, a result which is unattainable without such belief. Hence we should approach the claims of religion with the will to believe. Here religion means not belief in this or that particular dogma, but the spiritual world as a whole. It is quite true, as we know from our everyday experience, that faith in a fact does help to create the fact. This truth was stated over two thousand years ago by the Roman poet, Virgil,[1] in his description of the great boat-race, where he speaks thus of one of the leading crews in the race : *Possunt quia posse videntur*—" They have the power to win because they believe they have." By believing that we can master a difficulty, we have in part equipped ourselves

[1] *Æn.* v. 231.

with the power to do so. By trusting in another man's good faith, we may beget that very virtue in him. By owning that we are responsible beings and acting accordingly, we become more conscientious. In fact it is often "our faith beforehand in an uncertified result" that "is the only thing that makes the result come true," [1] and "Life is worth living since it is what we make it from the moral point of view." [2] Thus faith in a fact helps to create the fact, but—only so far as the fact is dependent on our own personal action. James, by omitting this limitation, seems in his essay to imply that our faith in the unseen world without us does in some way create this unseen world.

But the will to believe cannot create that which was in existence before the act of belief, and is and will be in existence after it, whether we will to believe or no.

The will to believe certainly tends to create a fact that is dependent on our personal action, but it cannot create the spiritual world that is independent of us. And yet in respect of this spiritual world, the will to believe can render invaluable service. It cannot create that world, but it can create evidence attesting the reality of that world, and day by day can contribute fresh evidence. Faith in God finds its own verification through the influence it exerts on life and character.

The practical results of a belief provide evidence by which its truth or falsehood may be tested. By its fruits ye shall know of what character it is. Thus, though the will to believe cannot create truth that is

[1] James, *The Will to Believe*, p. 59. [2] *Op. cit.*, p. 61.

independent of us, it can create evidence of truth that did not before exist. Hence St. Paul writes to his disciples, "Ye are our epistles"—that is, epistles of the Lord—"known and read of all men," and our Lord admonishes His hearers: "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify"—not you, but "your Father, which is in heaven." Thus every good life is creating fresh evidence attesting the reality of God and of the spiritual world. Wherefore, my brethren, we cannot halt between two opinions of vital importance. If the ever-accumulating evidence of Christian lives attests the reality of the spiritual world, then neutrality is impossible and wrong; for it amounts to a decision against the claims of Christ. There are thus no neutrals in this never-ending strife between Christ and the claims of the material life. Instinctively or deliberately, here, there, and everywhere, the consciences of men are enrolling themselves and cannot help enrolling themselves on this side or on that. It is the inevitable law of this struggle that not a single, solitary soul escapes this moral and spiritual conscription, and such is the greatness of this strife that the whole universe is divided into two camps—for Christ or against Him—and even the most distant stars fight, and must fight, in their courses against those that reject Him. "He that is not with me is against me."

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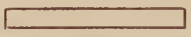

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